

# MEMORANDUM

TO: CBJ Mayor Beth Weldon and Assembly  
FROM: Jesse Perry, Housing and Homelessness Services Coordinator   
DATE: December 4, 2020  
SUBJECT: Recommendations from Mayor's ad hoc Committee on Homelessness

## **Mayor's ad hoc Committee on Homelessness**

The Mayor's ad hoc Committee on Homelessness (Committee) held three meetings between October 8 and October 29, 2020 with the purpose of holding a conversation on the issues regarding homelessness in Juneau and to report back to the Assembly.

## **Context**

CBJ's changing role in the delivery of social services corresponds to changes in the homeless community and service capacity within Juneau's Continuum of Care (CoC).

Previous to this Committee's work, in 2017 the [Assembly Task Force on Homelessness](#) held six meetings in 2017 that reached the following conclusions:

- In response to the gap left when the Thane Campground closes each fall, investing in JCHH proposals that have a greater chance of long-term success is preferred to investing in a Winter Campground.
- A CBJ Housing and Homelessness Services Coordinator can work with providers, the Assembly, and members of the community at-large to build capacity and to develop Juneau's Coordinated Entry System.
- A zero to 25 bed Warming Shelter between the months of November and April when the temperature is at freezing or below will fill a vital services gap.
- Waiting for six months before considering Scattered Site Housing First funding will allow time for the current Permanent Supported Housing (PSH) project to advance.
- An Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT), which is a transdisciplinary outreach team, can address the needs of clients with severe and persistent mental illness.

The Task Force's recommendations were followed by the successful collaboration of CBJ, JCHH, the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and other stakeholders to implement the Task Force's recommendations.

Since the service changes initiated in 2017, additional gaps have come to the Assembly's attention:

- Gaps in funding limit the ability of providers to develop new services and sustain existing ones.
- Service gaps leave those experiencing severe mental health and substance abuse disabilities without a clear path to housing.
- Gaps in data limit the community's ability to assess its needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the stress on Juneau's homelessness services. On March 16, 2020, CBJ activated Juneau's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and worked with local service providers in response. The following week, the Cold Weather Shelter was relocated to the Armory in compliance with CDC guidance for congregate shelters. Since the outbreak Quarantine and Isolation services have been provided at the Driftwood Hotel, Mt. Jumbo Gym, and Centennial Hall. As COVID spread among the homeless community in September, the EOC, Public Health, Bartlett Regional Hospital, and Capital City Fire/Rescue coordinated rigorous weekly testing in coordination with housing and shelter providers to monitor the spread of COVID-19. As of December 4, three consecutive weeks of testing have resulted in the detection of zero positive cases within the homeless population.

With grants by the Assembly in support of homelessness services there remain significant funding needs within the Coalition. Prompted by these and other contingencies, Mayor Weldon on September 25, 2020 appointed the ad hoc Committee on Homelessness and issued a charge to:

- Develop a framework to help providers coordinate purposes and services between CBJ and social service providers
- Review the JCHH priorities as submitted to the Assembly
- Detail the importance of data and commitment to collecting and managing data about homelessness

### **Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness Recommendations**

- **Youth Shelter:** JCHH has worked to restore emergency services for Youth (ages 10-18, 18-24) since the Cornerstone Campus, located at 9290 Hurlock Avenue, closed in 2018. In the fall of 2019, JCHH joined a region-wide collaboration involving CBJ, local and state agencies, Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority (THRHA), as well as youth with lived experiences to identify the service needs among homeless youth. To date, the Coalition has added a Youth Navigator position, and secured funding toward an emergency shelter and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) program for youth. The Committee encourages the Assembly's active collaboration with all stakeholders to secure a site where shelter and housing services for youth can be delivered.
- **JCHH Planning and Resource Development:** The need for homelessness services has expanded while at the same time Juneau providers face increasing

service costs. These conditions put pressure on providers to defer maintenance and repairs in order to maintain the delivery of services. Assembly support for long-range planning will help the community secure long-range sustainability in its delivery of homelessness services.

- **Assembly Liaison to JCHH:** The Assembly often receives funding requests to support homelessness services. An Assembly Liaison to JCHH will provide a strong link for the Assembly and the Coalition to collaborate on mutual plans and goals.
- **JCHH Updates to the Assembly each September:** As homelessness and homelessness services continue to evolve, an annual update to the Assembly will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to review progress and focus efforts toward making homelessness in Juneau rare, brief, and non-recurring.