

Written responses to questions received by JOHS

STEERING COMMITTEE PROCESS:

- “I don't feel like as a group we came to a consensus about the demographics, especially with regard to prioritizing those with disabilities. Some on the steering committee, as well as some from public comments, spoke to this concern.”

The steering committee's role is to provide input and make recommendations. At our first meeting, we discussed when the steering committee would be providing input and when we would be making recommendations.

The steering committee wasn't asked to come to a consensus or to vote about the priority populations at the shelter, nor was a formal vote taken.

The facilitator did ask members to share whether they understood, when asked generally if they'd support prioritizing people with disabilities, that this also included prioritizing people with an addiction disorder.

We'll continue working to ensure that straw polls or informal check-ins feel even more distinct from any formal votes we might request.

- “Can we call for a committee vote at the next steering committee meeting regarding the prioritization of those with disabilities?”

No. We heavily weighed the steering committee's feedback regarding the demographics of the population to be served, and ultimately decided to serve single women and couples at the Foster shelter.

AHFE's first guiding principle, adopted in 2013, is to prioritize vulnerable populations:

Homelessness has significant detrimental effects on everyone, yet there are some whose health and safety are placed at even greater risk for harm without a safe and stable place to call home. These groups include, but are not limited to: children, women fleeing from domestic violence situations and people with disabilities. Strategies to identify and assist the most vulnerable groups will be prioritized.

AHFE's adult emergency shelter prioritized populations are women, Veterans, people with disabilities, and seniors 55+.

To truly address the suffering and isolation that often with chronic homelessness, and also, at the same time, address the community's livability concerns, we have committed to offering shelter and services to neighbors who haven't been able to engage at more traditional shelters.

That includes ensuring a safe bed and a path back to housing for people in our priority populations who are sometimes struggling with several disabling conditions at once, including but not limited to an addiction.

In a supportive social services environment, those neighbors can be connected with services and offered the help and community they need to be successful on their own once more.

This year's PIT Count reflects this commitment to prioritizing those most vulnerable to chronic homelessness by our unsheltered count being the lowest it's been since 2009.

BUDGET:

Seismic Q's

- "1) Were these seismic improvements budgeted for in the nearly \$2 million in improvements originally mentioned at the County Commissioners Board meeting on 1/25/18, or will this upgrade require additional funds to be allocated for it?"

Yes, the initial rough estimate for renovations of the Foster shelter included seismic improvements.

- "2) For the portion of the building leased by 7-11, will the costs of the seismic improvements be paid for by the owner of the property, Winson International, LLC? If not, from what funding will this portion of the building be paid from for the upgrades?"
- "You mentioned that there will be seismic upgrades, is there any chance the landlord can contribute to those costs because we won't own the building?"

We are negotiating with the owner now to see what portions of the necessary improvements could be covered by the landlord. All renovations will be funded through the City and County general funds.

Public Safety/Neighborhood Improvement Q's

- "How much money is in the shelter fund for the Foster Shelter that is dedicated to neighborhood improvement outside of the shelter? I'm assuming the steering committee will discuss how these funds are spent, correct?"
- "What kind of resources, as in specific dollars, do we have for public safety at this shelter?"

We currently do not have a specific dollar amount set aside. We will use the recommendations that emerge from Good Neighbor Agreement process to inform our budgeting process. Allocation decisions will be made from there.

PROGRAM:

- "TPI plans to prioritize those with addictions over those that are sober (other disabilities aside). Committee members in general do not seem opposed to the women, couples, elderly and veteran parts of the proposed population for the shelter, but some, including myself, are concerned about prioritization of a population with addictions."

Shelter providers do not score addictions over other disabilities, or score disabilities over other priorities, when determining whom to prioritize for shelter. People who seek shelter often identify as part of several of our priority populations. Providers look at the sum of a participant's needs and history as they move neighbors into available shelter beds.

A Home for Everyone's strategy of lowering hurdles to shelter, to offer services to those who hadn't otherwise been able to engage with traditional shelter, was adopted after months of work with service providers, subject experts and community members with direct experience with homelessness. That shelter strategy was recognized by the federal United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2017 as a national best practice.

In general, people with addictions can't be excluded from public accommodations because of their addictions, no matter where they are in the community. The difference, in a supportive social services environment, is that they can be connected with services and offered the help and community they need to be successful on their own once more.

Shelters are most effective when people can enter and exit rapidly, with an appropriate level of services for their needs.

Low-barrier shelters do not require sobriety upfront, which can be a barrier keeping some people outside. Instead, they focus on helping people after they get inside. Instead of making sobriety a precondition, the shelter encourages them to come in and then make progress on rebuilding their lives, because they will need to address those issues eventually in order to make progress.

- "This site is less ideal for those struggling with addiction, both for those residents of the shelter and the neighborhood."

The city and county operate social services throughout the community. It's not feasible or humane to locate these services in distant pockets of the region far from amenities -- places where participants might feel isolated and separate from the larger community they must reconnect with -- as a strategy to help some participants manage addiction and recovery.

Nearly every neighborhood in Portland includes some combination of nearby restaurants, cafes, bars, grocery stores, gas stations and convenience stores, etc. We don't expect, ask or force our housed neighbors to live or take jobs far from those amenities as they struggle with addiction or recovery.

We can't ask the same of our unsheltered neighbors.

We also can't use the presence of those amenities as a reason to cross off a given site or neighborhood that meets our needs and criteria -- and deny beds and services not only to neighbors with addictions, who might benefit the most from those services, but also to neighbors who aren't experiencing an addiction but still need a safer place to sleep off the streets.

- Proximity to children/day care/Mt. Scott

The City and County operate social services throughout the community, and many, for years, have been close to schools and other sites where children are present, including daycares, parks, and community centers.

We should be clear, however: If an individual's criminal history precludes them from being within a certain distance from a school, then they wouldn't be allowed to live at this shelter.

Parole and probation officers, as they do throughout our community, enforce supervision terms that set those boundaries. And they will arrest those who violate them, whether they live in shelter, are camping outside or living in homes of their own.

While we cannot foreclose having homeless services near these uses, we can and do work to make sure those services are a good neighbor to all adjacent neighbors and uses.

In general, people with criminal histories and addictions can't be excluded from public accommodations, no matter where they are in the community. The difference, in a supportive social services environment, is that they can be connected with services and offered the help and community they need to be successful on their own once more.

- **"I'm most concerned about hangers-on. I'm concerned that we've heard that Transition Projects doesn't do anything about the people who are not in the shelters. I'm also concerned about drug usage being allowed in this facility. In the design, we haven't included a place for them to do drugs. That means they will be doing drugs in our neighborhood. I haven't gotten a real answer."**

TPI does not allow illegal drug use on-site, and while they can't surveil every guest's behavior in the community, they do rely heavily on their community partnerships to address issues that might come up.

Housed and unhoused folks across our communities are already using substances in our neighborhoods. Low-barrier shelter offers an opportunity for folks who are experiencing homelessness a place to come in and get connected to the support systems they need to get on their paths to healing.

Sgt. Randy Teig, a sergeant with East Precinct's Neighborhood Response Team, said at the April 18 steering committee meeting that he'd either taken action on or looked at reports generated in connection with two other low-barrier shelters managed by the Joint Office: Willamette Resource Center and Hansen.

He found issues in the vicinity of Hansen weren't tied to the shelter. Rather, they were connected to a private faith-based shelter very close by that was since closed. And only a handful of hanger-on incidents, most connected to the same person who was trespassed, were documented in more than 18 months outside Willamette.

- **"I live 2 blocks south of site. Echoing Jenna's comments. Very concerned about drug use and dealing. The point in time survey says 45% of homeless are self-reported addicts. Can we have a treatment mandate or commitment to increase police presence? Perfect world would be a mandatory treatment program."**

AHFE is committed to Housing First and Assertive Engagement service models. Requiring treatment in shelter at every facility does not align with our commitment to those best practices. Mandatory treatment, instead of offering the stability of a bed as part of an invitation to seek treatment, can be a barrier that keeps some neighbors from seeking shelter.

As we heard from Sgt. Teig, PPB is committed to responding to crimes if they arise, but will not increase their presence without evidence of need.

Law enforcement agencies also work to divert people in the justice system to programs such as LEAD® and the Service Coordination Team.

LEAD® allows officers to redirect low-level offenders involved in drug activity to intensive case management tailored to the individual's needs instead of jail and prosecution.

The Service Coordination Team reduces the incidence of drug related property crimes and stops the cycle of criminality and addiction by providing treatment opportunities for chronic offenders -- and coordinating jail sentences, probation and parole oversight and housing and treatment. Program graduates have reduced their recidivism by 91%, and recidivism among program participants has been reduced 43%.

- “How are people already living in neighborhood getting served? Sounds like you are addressing it but I want you to know it is a concern. How will new neighbors have a positive impact to the community?”

In other neighborhoods, shelter managers rely on strong relationships with their neighbors to communicate about folks in need, and connect those neighbors to services, onsite or nearby.

- “Have any of you gone out, on the street, and talked to any of the homeless in this neighborhood? Are there a large number of single women and single couples out there? All I see is men myself? Who is this shelter for? It isn't for the people in this neighborhood on the street.”
- “I represent Southeast Allied Communities. What we've been told is that this should hopefully serve local residents, I was recently listening to an OPB article saying that most families according to Home Forward came from outside Portland. What are we doing to ensure that residents are actually from our neighborhoods and from Portland?”

JOHS coordinates our local Point In Time count to assess the needs and demographics of people experiencing homelessness in Multnomah County.

We also fund and coordinate outreach, such as mobile housing teams and inreach teams to connect folks living on the streets to services and sometimes directly to housing opportunities. AHFE is committed to prioritizing our most vulnerable neighbors, including women, seniors, vets and folks with disabilities. Last year, over 1,500 women were on a waitlist to enter adult shelter provided through TPI.

But because of our community's expanded investments in shelter, offering more beds, and in housing placements, which move people more people through the bed we have, wait lists for both men and women have decreased year-over-year.

Homelessness is often less visible in more vulnerable populations, such as women escaping domestic violence and those who are doubled-up or living in their cars. The Foster shelter will serve self-identified women and couples.

The OPB story was about a family shelter operated by a nonprofit named Human Solutions (Home Forward is our local housing authority). That program differed from the adult shelter planned for Foster in two key ways:

Until November 2017, it was a no-turn-away facility, meaning any family with kids who came to the shelter's door would be accommodated in the shelter, if there was room, or in overflow space provided off-site. The family shelter was the only no-turn-away site in Oregon and in most of the West.

In addition, the shelter did not require reservations. Unlike at Foster and our adult shelters, families could come directly to the shelter and be served, at any time. That policy also changed last fall, requiring families to call 211 for intake.

- "What will parking look like? Because if residents are registering vehicles at the shelter, there will be a lot of cars."

The Willamette shelter serves the same number of folks we anticipate to serve at Foster and currently has just five cars registered to their guests. We do not anticipate more cars at Foster. It's also important to make clear that residents rely on their vehicles to travel to and from appointments, work sites and classes. It wouldn't be equitable to force residents to give up that lifeline, and possibly lose out on services that could get them housed, in exchange for shelter.

- "What does success look like? For the residents, for the community, and for the shelter itself?"

Success is people experiencing homelessness getting into shelter as quickly as possible and then getting connected to the support that they need, however that looks for them, to find and stay in housing. That's a win for all of us.

- "We know that needles show up. Can we build a sharps container into the exterior of the building?"

We are working on placing exterior sharps containers at one of our adult shelters right now. We are exploring other public-facing sharps container options, as well.

- "People don't just not do drugs when they have an addiction. The whole county process of needle exchanges has no accountability. Need to address giving them out in abundance."

Shelter programs do not conduct syringe exchanges. But the [county does facilitate an exchange alongside Outside In](#). Together the programs report an average exchange rate of about 100 percent. Research shows that cities with syringe exchange programs have fewer inappropriately discarded syringes than cities without exchange programs.