

Resolution of the Whatcom Human Rights Task Force Regarding Our Role in Resolving the Homeless Crisis in Bellingham and Whatcom County

Resolution: Given the way things stand now on December 29, 2020, the WHRTF will withhold moving forward with the city and county to serve as an organizational structure to contract with, as we support the work of the 210 Collective Emergency Shelter.

Resolution passed: In support: 5; Against 2; Abstain: 2

Reasoning: First, the aspirations of Bellingham Mutual Aid Collective (BMAC) are not reflected in what is being made available by the city and county at this time. Second, we do not yet have assurance that our corporate insurance policy would cover liabilities that may arise as a third-party operator of a low-barrier emergency shelter. We are awaiting a determination from our insurer, which likely, will not come until after the New Year. Third, the Task Force does not have the capacity to, in good faith, oversee the staffing and other operations of homeless facilities. We are an educational and advocacy organization, and we can provide sponsorship for independent community initiatives that align with our mission and vision. We are not a direct service provider.

The ability to have a home secure from danger by humans or other forces of nature is a fundamental human right. The Task Force will continue to advocate for a compassionate and substantive resolution to the immediate emergency situation and a sustainable plan for achieving the long term goal of housing for all. A broad-based, comprehensive response will require the city and county taking responsibility and engaging the general public in support of the efforts. We respect the vision of the BMAC and are deeply grateful for their commitment. We look forward to supporting the continued efforts of the BMAC, our elected officials, and the community as a whole as we determine equitable and workable solutions to the systemic crisis of unhoused community members here in Bellingham and Whatcom County.