



SPOKANE CITY COUNCIL

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Spokane, WA 99201-3335  
(509) 625-6255

January 13, 2022

Mayor Nadine Woodward  
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.,  
Spokane, Washington, 99201

*Delivered via email to nwoodward@spokanecity.org*

Dear Mayor Woodward,

The undersigned members of the Spokane City Council stand with our constituents and community members in expressing our concerns regarding the closure of the Convention Center emergency shelter on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Moreover, we remain concerned that an alternate shelter has not been identified and secured as we continue to experience life threatening winter conditions and many of our community members remain on the streets.

It is important to reiterate that the Spokane City Council has enacted several ordinances that should have mitigated the current situation. Instead, there are insufficient shelter beds to serve the houseless in the current frigid temperatures, even though Council has provided all operating funds requested by this Administration for providing shelter during inclement weather. We stand ready to approve additional funding when requested.

The ordinance provisions passed by City Council regarding shelter beds include:

**Spokane Municipal Code 18.05.020 (A)(1)**

1. Warming centers sufficient to meet the shelter needs of currently unsheltered homeless individuals and other vulnerable individuals seeking shelter in Spokane **will be activated on each day during which the temperature is predicted by the National Weather Service to be 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower and designated low-barrier shelter space was at ninety percent (90%) capacity or greater during the previous night.** The warming centers will operate at a minimum during the hours that temperatures are lower than thirty-two (32) degrees Fahrenheit. The City may, by contract with its center provider(s), raise the activation temperature for warming centers, but in no event will the activation temperature be lower than thirty-two (32) degrees Fahrenheit.

**Spokane Municipal Code 18.05.020 (A)-(B)**

- B. The Community Health and Human Services ("CHHS") Department shall implement the appropriate policies and procedures, including without limitation making funding requests; recommendations regarding center providers; the designation of specific locations to be used as warming, cooling, and safe air centers; the arrangement of other appropriate measures to the City Council in order to carry out the specific provisions and intent of this section; and **shall**

**continuously maintain contracts and/or appropriate non-monetary agreements scalable to the need for emergency warming, cooling and safe air center provider services, with no lapse in coverage at any point in time throughout each year**, regardless of whether the services are provided under contract, by interlocal agreement or by city staff.

- C. **No later than September 30 of each year, and annually thereafter, the City shall publish and disseminate the City's plan for emergency warming, cooling and safe air centers for the coming year**, which shall provide details of the name(s) and location(s) of center providers and similar resources, the capacity and scalability of all emergency centers, by type and population(s) focus (if any), activation criteria, cost, funding source(s), partnerships and the communications and publicity plan to ensure that people who are vulnerable or are experiencing homelessness will know where they can obtain these services.

#### **Spokane Municipal Code 18.05.030 (B)(3)**

3. **At no time shall the City reduce or eliminate specific night-by-night shelter beds without first having in place additional replacement shelter bed capacity** sufficient to meet the requirements of SMC 18.05 unless authorized by City Council resolution.

To help with implementation and public information about the policy the Council adopted, the Council required notification and reporting on the progress of these efforts, namely:

#### **Spokane Municipal Code 18.05.020 (B)(6)**

6. **Each calendar quarter the City shall present to City Council and publish on the City's website a written report using HMIS and other reliable data sources to provide its estimate of the average number of homeless individuals in the City of Spokane and Spokane County who were unsheltered on a nightly basis over the previous quarter along with demographic information and key barriers identified by them to securing adequate shelter.**

Council's job is to set policy and provide financial resources and Administration's job is to implement those policies and enter contracts to spend the money. These provisions have not been followed. For example:

1. An estimate/ listing of unsheltered homeless individuals has not been published.
2. A contract for emergency warming center services has not been continuously maintained.
3. 100 low-barrier co-ed beds were terminated in June 2021 without replacing them.
4. The emergency warming center was shut down when the temperature was well below freezing and the low-barrier shelter space for men and women over the age of 24 was well over 90% full.

It is past time to blame others or list reasons why we haven't achieved success. Instead, we should focus on promptly implementing solutions in compliance with City law. Sheltering unhoused individuals during inclement weather is a matter of life and death, and we as a City government must come together to prevent this from occurring again. City Council has laid the foundation and created sound policy to address the needs of our homeless population and we ask that the Administration adhere to those

policies and move forward with a sensible plan and a secure location for our most venerable. Time is of the essence, and we stand ready to help.

Sincerely,



Breean Beggs, City Council President



Karen Stratton, City Council Member, Dist. 3



Lori Kinnear, City Council Member, Dist. 2



Betsy Wilkerson, City Council Member, Dist. 2



Zack Zappone, City Council Member, Dist. 3