

Questions re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

From: [Solveig Overby](#)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 4:32 PM

To: Brian Pine; [Samantha Dunn](#)

Brian,

I am not persuaded that the location will be attractive to the population CEDO plans to move there. The effort is well intentioned but I don't think it will meet the needs that CEDO hopes it will.

I'm disappointed that this proposal has not been vetted by the intended population expected to move there for up to three years. The homeless services agencies should have been able to assist the City in that effort. That CEDO didn't ask them to do that is problematic.

This proposal might look good on paper but in reality it doesn't do any better than the homeless options that have been provided for decades. It merely kicks the can down the road. What's needed is more SROs like St. Josephs on Elmwood. Why has no one been planning for developing this sort of housing? Because these are not profitable to developers and no one wants them located on their street. That's pretty clear from my perspective.

Agencies serving homeless folks have been in the business for years. They have not been successful in finding ways to house the % of the population that just don't function well within our standard social expectations, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps these well-meaning agencies don't want to face the unfortunate fact that what they offer does not work or feel safe for many people living on the street.

Sadly, CEDO is taking the same path, expecting a different result. I suggest you ask the homeless services agencies to help you collect information from homeless folks about where the Pods should be located and what services they need co-located with them: bathrooms and showers, laundry facilities, community kitchen, etc. Do it right.

Solveig

From: Brian Pine

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:42 PM

To: Solveig Overby; Samantha Dunn

Subject: RE: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

Hi Solveig:

Your point about who has been consulted about the location is well taken. We are facing constraints in terms of time pressure and staff capacity to undertake this type of outreach. The location options are limited by many factors and we weighed those against the need to move rapidly. Given the fact that the State motel voucher program is coming to an end and most congregate shelters are not re-opening, the

need is so acute that location becomes somewhat less important. We focused on city-owned sites with easy access to all of the utilities and to services needed by residents.

None of the housing or homeless service agencies have expressed concerns about the location being unattractive to those experiencing homelessness. We consider them to be subject matter experts who know the population and their needs.

I wanted to add that one former Sears Lane resident recently asked Councilor Tracy how to get on the list for living here, and Rita Markley said that at least 2 residents expressed interest.

Thanks,

Brian

RE: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.
[Solveig Overby](#)

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 3:16 PM

To: Brian Pine; [Samantha Dunn](#)

Brian,

I'm concerned by your answers to my first two questions. They sound like well-intentioned housed people deciding how unhoused people should want to live without actually consulting them. This happens too frequently.

I will read through the other material you provided from the downtown business owners/managers questions.

My fourth question seems to have been missed.

Q4. Was there consideration of splitting the Shelter Pods up into different locations?

(Answer was located in Q&A with downtown business owners and managers)

Solveig

From: Brian Pine

Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:36 PM

To: Solveig Overby; Samantha Dunn

Subject: RE: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

Hi Solveig,

Your questions will be addressed first and then, I will share the other replies below that were discussed in a meeting with downtown business owners/managers:

Q1: Can you tell me which homeless services agencies were involved in the selection of the proposed location? Can you give me the names of a couple of the folks you worked with on this proposal so I can

check in with them before the Wednesday meeting? We have been in consultation with all pertinent City department and with multiple organizations that comprise the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance. While we did not involve homeless service organizations in the City's site selection process, many have expressed support for the location and have already heard interest from among their clients.

Q2: Can you tell me how many of the homeless people whose "shantys" were removed from the Sears Lane encampment and other homeless folks have been consulted about this new proposed location? We have not consulted with residents of the former Sears Lane encampment but at least one has expressed interest in living in a shelter pod at the proposed location.

Q3: Where are the other nine locations that were considered for location of the shelter pods?

These sites were all considered by City staff: (description of locations added)

305 Flynn Ave – church at the corner of Flynn and Pine St.

195 Flynn Ave - Across the railroad tracks from City Market South End store

220 Main Street – municipal parking lot at Main and S. Winooski (location of underground ravine sewer)

345 Pine Street – former Vermont Transit property where Farmer's Market is held-

51 Elmwood Ave – unclear where this location is

585 Pine / Electric Ave- Burlington Electric Dept. parking lot

70 Pearl Street – municipal parking lot behind old Bove's restaurant and Dunkin Donuts

901 North Ave – church parking lot at intersection of North Ave. and 127

BHS Parking Lot

Sears Lane

Community Meeting Model:

The development of this project will be guided by best practices from other communities across the country. By bringing together a community group around the site we can lower barriers, fear and conflict, and humanize our responses, as a community. This community meeting model operates at a number of other shelter sites around the country. It brings together stakeholders; site guests, staff and volunteers, community members, neighbors, faith groups, local businesses, local gov etc. By meeting and discussing questions or issues on site and identifying opportunities to collaborate the connections built help to reduce tensions, suspicion and conflict. We hope that our partners on Church Street agree to contribute to support this model.

Initial Shelter Pod questions from downtown business owners/managers:

1. What are the benefits of a the proposed location?

The CRC and Shelter Village are being co-located for efficiency of service provision and access. Many other services that the community experiencing homelessness need to access are located in our downtown. Our transport hub is downtown. This is a central site, city owned, accessible, and close to services.

2. Why is this location chosen and not using several sites?

After analyzing ten potential sites, the Elmwood Avenue Parking lot was identified as the location that will best meet the needs of the project because of its proximity to transportation, services and

amenities and its ease of connection to municipal power, water and sewer. There would be increased capital and operational costs of creating pod communities at more than one location.

3. “What behaviors might be discouraged or prohibited?” This is a low barrier emergency shelter. The definition of Low Barrier varies but essentially means that requirements for entry are limited or minimal. Focused on Harm Reduction , a low barrier shelter encourages participants to move closer to services and seek resources by removing obstacles to access. Folks are welcomed, barriers that may exist at other sites are removed. This does not mean that there are no limits on behaviors. There is an expectation that our community members obey the law and behave in a manner that is non-threatening and respectful. Illegal activity will be prohibited, as will weapons. The site operations will include written standards to meet needs of special populations, expectations of guests will be clearly communicated and easily accessible to guests and all staff and volunteers should receive training in trauma informed care.

4. What are grounds for being removed? – The site will be managed with operational policies and procedures that include formal processes for voluntary and involuntary discharge, and a required appeals process. These will comply with statewide standards for Emergency Shelter, be client centered, and recognize the rights of the individuals affected.

5. May guests consume alcohol and cannabis on the premises? The site proposed is for a low barrier shelter. Illegal activity is prohibited. There might be restrictions on outdoor activity (open container law etc).

6. How will hard drug use be handled? Illegal activity is prohibited on the site. Services will be available to all community members and the site will operate on harm reduction principles. Narcan will be available and staff trained on use.

7. What is the criteria for living there? Following statewide emergency shelter guidelines the prioritization might be as follows:

a. Literally Homeless (Category 1) - Unsheltered

b. Literally Homeless (Category 1) – Staying in a motel not paid for by self, including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence

c. Literally Homeless (Category 1) – Staying in a place other than a motel, including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence

d. Imminently Homeless (Category 2) – Including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence

Intake will be coordinated with other shelters, economic services and 211 to emphasize ease of access for those seeking emergency shelter.

8. What does a "managed site" involve?

The site will be managed by an operating partner organization. The site will be operated in accordance with statewide guidelines for Emergency Shelter. Operating partner will be responsible for overall site management and physical services. Other partner organization will contribute to human and social services for guests.

9. Will the CRC be co-located with the pods? Yes.

10. Timeline for Opening – July 1st is target date and this aligns with expected changes to the GA Emergency Shelter program that are expected to make hundreds of individuals ineligible for the program.

11. How can you assure us this will be well managed? The site will be managed and operated in accordance with statewide guidelines for Emergency Shelter. In addition actively pursuing a partnership with organizations experienced with similar operations, we are hoping for acceptance and partnership

from the wider community. We look forward to working with all stakeholders since we all have a part to play in supporting these vulnerable community members to stabilize their lives and return to safe and secure housing. We hope that we can rely on this generous business community to contribute their time and ideas to support this community wide effort.

Thanks and we can certainly discuss these issues further if you would like to talk by phone.

Brian

Brian Pine
CEDO Director
Community & Economic Development Office
City Hall, 149 Church St., Room 32
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 578-6953
www.burlingtonvt.gov/cedo

Please note that this communication and any response to it will be maintained as a public record and may be subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Act. CEDO (including the Community Justice Center), as part of the City of Burlington, is bound by the Vermont Public Records Act. There are exemptions to this Act for certain personal and confidential information, and we will take steps to protect your privacy. If you have any questions, please ask us.

-----Original Message-----

From: Solveig Overby <soverby@burlingtonvt.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 5:40 PM
To: Brian Pine <bpine@burlingtonvt.gov>; Samantha Dunn <sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov>
Subject: RE: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

Brian,

OK. Thanks.

Solveig

From: Brian Pine
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 5:01 PM
To: Solveig Overby; Samantha Dunn
Subject: RE: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

Hi Solveig,

We got both of your emails regarding the location of the shelter pods. I will circle back with you as soon

as possible but no later than tomorrow mid-morning.

Thanks,

Brian Pine
CEDO Director
Community & Economic Development Office
City Hall, 149 Church St., Room 32
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 578-6953
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-----Original Message-----

From: Solveig Overby <soverby@burlingtonvt.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 4:02 PM
To: Brian Pine <bpine@burlingtonvt.gov>; Samantha Dunn <sdunn@burlingtonvt.gov>
Subject: Question re: proposed Elmwood lot for shelter pod shanty town on PWC agenda for Wed.

Brian or Samantha,

I'm reviewing Agenda item 6, the proposal to site the 30 Shelter Pods in the Elmwood Ave parking lot. I have some questions.

Can you tell me which homeless services agencies were involved in the selection of the proposed location? Can you give me the names of a couple of the folks you worked with on this proposal so I can check in with them before the Wednesday meeting?

Can you tell me how many of the homeless people whose shantys were removed from the Sear's Lane encampment and other homeless folks have been consulted about this new proposed location?

I'd like to confirm that the intended residents have weighed in and would choose to move to this parking lot location if it's constructed there.

Solveig

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