

From: **Johnson, Jason** <Jason.Johnson@seattle.gov>
Date: Fri, Jul 31, 2020 at 2:07 PM
Subject: RE: LIHI Finding Shelter for CHOP Campers
To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>
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On July 29 and July 30, Sharon Lee, Executive Director of the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) sent letters to City Council regarding LIHI's position on the Navigation Team referral process and LIHI's outreach activities at Seattle Central College following the closure of the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP).

I am writing today to provide clarity to the role the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) and Navigation Team had in these specific events and HSD's role as a funder and steward of public investments.

CHOP, Seattle Central College, and Navigation Team

The Navigation Team was not involved with the closure of the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP) area or the demonstration on private property at Seattle Central College.

The action to remove the CHOP and subsequent tents in Cal Anderson Park was in response to an [Executive Order by the Mayor of Seattle and an operation carried out by the Seattle Police Department \(SPD\)](#). HSD directed the Navigation Team's System Navigators, its HSD outreach specialists, in partnership with other community partners, to provide outreach and services to people experiencing homelessness within the CHOP. The team connected with 180 individuals, resulting in 38 referrals into shelter, over a two week period prior to the CHOP's closure. These efforts are [documented here](#) and [reported on by media](#). It is important to note that the team's System Navigators are trained, have spent their careers working in outreach, and have lived experience. And it is even more important to note that the police officers assigned to the Navigation Team do not make referrals to shelter—only the System Navigators.

Additionally, the Navigation Team did not remove the encampment at Seattle Central College. Seattle Central College requested SPD support for removing the encampment/demonstration on private property—which is outside the scope of HSD and the Navigation Team's authority. However, as seen with the CHOP, HSD directed System Navigators to provide outreach and offers of shelter leading up to SPD's and Seattle Central College's closure of the demonstration. This was also [reported on by media](#).

What is concerning is that LIHI was on site at Seattle Central College providing outreach—a service the City does not fund nor is aware LIHI has trained staff to conduct—and moved a number of individuals into a City-funded shelter outside of HSD and LIHI's contracted referral process. Additionally, LIHI reported no shelter vacancies during this time for multiple days (a contractual requirement) and yet had enough vacancies in a new enhanced shelter for up to 20 individuals from outside of the North Seattle community. Ultimately, we are pleased to hear that 20 people living unsheltered were connected to shelter, but again, this was done outside of an intentionally designed shelter referral process in place to ensure equity of access and prioritizes those most in need of limited shelter resources.

Service Provider Stewardship

HSD has a responsibility to manage contracts and investments to ensure public resources are being deployed legally and effectively for nearly 200 community agencies. In regard to this specific matter, HSD's has ongoing operational conversations with all 15 homeless service providers under contract to ensure safe, coordinated and effective shelter and outreach.

HSD has not threatened LIHI and did not direct LIHI to usurp its contract to provide outreach and move people into a City-funded shelter outside of the normal referral process.

LIHI is contracted to provide shelter, not outreach, and is obligated to report shelter vacancies—which has been an interest of the Mayor and City Council. Reporting vacancies helps trained outreach workers connect people to shelter and provides insight into the shelter system's capacity and throughput. Reporting vacancies also helps ensure the referral process is fair and equitable. To achieve this, HSD has developed a centralized referral system that provides a daily inventory of vacancy. These reporting systems are memorialized in HSD's contracts with shelter providers.

HSD will be working with LIHI to find out why LIHI reported no vacancies for any of its shelters between July 17 and July 21, when in fact it appears LIHI had resources that could have been utilized by the Navigation Team and partners. When issues like this occur with any provider, HSD's contract team engages providers to offer guidance and recommendations for compliance. HSD will be following up with LIHI to fully understand the situation that occurred and develop appropriate next steps.

Sincerely,

Jason

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