

August 4, 2020

Jason Johnson, Interim Director  
Human Services Department  
City of Seattle



**RE: Response to HSD on LIHI Referrals of Homeless People at CHOP**

Dear Jason,

Thank you for your July 31 letter. We wish to clear up some misunderstandings and clarify what actions LIHI took to move 20 homeless people out of harm's way.

**Diverse Population Helped**

The people camping out at Broadway and Pine and Cal Anderson Park were under threat of being swept by police from the East Precinct on July 21. See attached posted notice. LIHI only had **a weekend** to move 20 homeless people safely into LIHI tiny houses and shelters. On Saturday, July 18, through early morning Monday, July 20, we moved 7 people into tiny house villages, 9 people into Lakefront Community House (24/7 enhanced shelter) and 4 people went to other shelters.

The people we helped included 3 women, 3 transgender women and 14 men. 50% are people of color, including 7 Blacks, 1 Native American, 1, Native Hawaiian, 1 Asian/Black and 10 whites. 50% are living with a disability. Age range from 19 to 61 years old. We have attached the HMIS de-identified information as HSD requested.

**How Did LIHI Have Vacancies and Why Were These Not Reported to the Nav Team?**

LIHI did not have vacancies on Friday, July 17, therefore none were reported to the Nav Team. Once we knew we wanted to help people at CHOP who were going to get swept, our on-site staff worked over the weekend to quickly repair, clean out, disinfect and make ready tiny houses for occupancy. We had tiny houses that were recently vacated, some full of people's belongings, and otherwise not ready for new referrals.

At Lakefront, we did not have vacant rooms, but because of my request, staff created space by asking existing residents to double up to make room for new people from CHOP. Lakefront had a rash of people's belongings getting stolen when the rooms were shared, so staff was waiting for secure lockers to get installed. These lockers are now in place. We also had a person who tested positive for Covid-19 (who is no longer there), which is another reason we did not maintain double occupancy in all the rooms.

**Navigation Team Involvement**

Typically, the Nav Team does not work on weekends, plus Nav Team referrals are not made to our villages during the weekends. Also, Christina Korpi does not work on weekends. Seattle Central College (SCC) staff had already informed us that the Nav Team was not successful in working with the population at CHOP to get them shelter or to relocate. We also received an urgent request from Diana Salazar to find beds for people displaced from CHOP. Therefore, LIHI felt compelled to help out the City, HSD, SCC and the homeless people.

SCC was working with SPD and Nav Team staff including: Asst. Chief Adrian Diaz; Tara Beck, Nav Team Director; SPD Officer Mark Witherbee, Lt. Daniel Nelson, Sgt. Eric Zerr; and others. The Nav Team's attempt to clear the site on July 9 is reported under 2020-208952.

On July 9 there were 25 people and Sgt. Zerr reported to Chief Diaz the following: “We spent 75 minutes at the site discussing resources and that the area they were staying on was private property, has a no camping policy, and persons there could be arrested for trespassing.... There were several people here who were not going to leave....” According to Lincoln Farris, SCC V.P. of Administrative Services, the Nav Team was on site July 8 and 9 and was not able to clear the South Lawn. He said Sgt. Zerr “recommended that city leadership and the college come up with an alternative to merely sweeping the area.”

After the request for help came from SCC, four people comprised of LIHI staff and volunteers went ahead with our own outreach and successfully moved 20 people to shelters and tiny houses. LIHI and SCC provided transportation to the various locations.

**Did LIHI Violate the HSD Contract?**

LIHI did not violate the HSD provision to notify the Nav Team of vacancies. We did not fail to notify the Nav Team of vacancies as we did not have vacancies on Friday, July 17 or on the days leading up to July 17.

Also, the 2020 HSD contracts for Interbay, Georgetown, Othello Villages, and Camp Second Chance were not signed by you and Diana Salazar and given to me to sign until July 28 and July 31—which are dates after we moved in the CHOP people. The T.C. Spirit Village contract does not include a provision for Nav Team referral. So, we technically did not violate the HSD contracts for those villages.

At Whittier Heights Village we did not have a vacancy until July 18, which is a Sunday. Our manager was out on bereavement leave, so no regular staff was there to report the vacancy to the Nav Team over the weekend. So, I decided to do an outside fill given the severity of the person’s condition. Andrew Constantino found out that a transgender woman who was being harassed at Cal Anderson Park was having a mental health breakdown and a behavioral counselor had placed her in the psych ward of a hospital. She was going to be discharged back to the streets on Monday. So, I decided to place her in the newly vacated tiny house at Whittier Heights.

We hope you understand better LIHI’s response to the CHOP situation. And we hope that you are sympathetic to the decisions we made to quickly shelter people before they are swept.

Sincerely,



Sharon H. Lee  
LIHI Executive Director