

June 22, 2023

To: Burien City Council

From: City of Burien Human Services Commission

The City of Burien's website describes the Human Services Commission as "an advisory body to the City Council responsible for providing advice and recommendations related to human services issues". It then proceeds to list four primary duties and responsibilities of the Commission, the first two being to:

- Identify and assess the human services needs in the city.
- Recommend priorities and approaches to address human services needs within the city.

It is to this end that we, as a commission, have observed with great frustration City Council's responses to events preceding and following the tent encampment within our community, and the lack of public debate or leadership from City Council to evaluate the merits of King County's offer to provide housing and funds to the City. We are concerned about the absence to date from City leadership of tangible efforts to appropriately address these very real human service needs.

Despite historical, ongoing, and considerable efforts from city and county staff, volunteers, agencies, faith communities and non-profits, all persons living in tents in the Burien community do not have access to viable, appropriate, local housing. There have been many statements by community members, including members of the City Council, that all have been offered housing. This is simply not true, despite many hours spent trying to find housing for all who have individual and unique histories and needs.

We recommend that the Burien City Council and city government work with King County to seek more expansive and permanent solutions for all residents as recent events are simply a reflection of greater system deficiencies – one which exists in many other cities, and which have been exacerbated by economic and social hardships, a worldwide pandemic, and a deficit of resources. Housing and fulfilling other basic needs for our neighbors must be the priority, and it is this that provides the best hope for helping them find stability.

In addition to being volunteer members of this advisory board, we are also residents of this community, patrons and supporters of our local businesses, and people who care about our neighbors. We respect the individual decisions of other commissioners to resign their volunteer positions with a city council that is not aligned with their values. It is our expectation that the City Council would work to understand the realities and complexities of the issues facing our neighbors and work toward viable short- and long-term solutions. **Your treatment of these issues, our unhoused neighbors, and our fellow commissioners leave us unsure that you are interested in addressing human services in a comprehensive way; nevertheless, we stand ready to partner with and support you in doing so.**

Respectfully submitted,

City of Burien Human Services Commission

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