



King County

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May 21, 2020

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a report related to capital project 1138678 DES LTLF Renton Red Lion, in response to Ordinance 19103 and a proposed motion that would, if enacted, approve the report.

At least 90,806 people in the United States have died from COVID-19 as of May 20th, 2020; King County has lost 530 residents. There are few precedents in recent history for such sudden and large-scale lethality.

Without knowing how the COVID-19 would affect local communities or the nation—and acting on Public Health guidance and observation of other countries' experiences with COVID-19—I proclaimed a County Emergency on March 1, 2020. The County Council affirmed the proclamation on March 3, 2020. Since then, the collective action of King County's residents, institutions, businesses, and governments has slowed the spread of COVID-19 in King County and preserved local hospital capacity for those who need it. While all success is fragile and reversible against a novel virus for which there is no vaccine or proven treatment, King County has so far avoided higher rates of death seen in some other communities and regions in the United States.

We are focusing on three strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 across King County. These strategies are driven by the public health principle that all persons' health is interdependent and the recognition that persons experiencing homelessness and others who cannot not safely isolate or quarantine in a home of their own would be among the most affected by COVID-19, while having the least power to prevent or control the disease's effects. The strategies are:

- *Strategy 1: Reinforcing the Existing Shelter System to Help People Avoid Becoming Ill*
This essential strategy, recommended by the Center for Disease Control, emphasizes informing and equipping service providers in congregate settings to enforce Public Health guidance on social distancing, hygiene, and isolation within existing facilities, to help prevent illness rather than solely mitigating it.
- *Strategy 2: Creating and Operating an Isolation & Quarantine System*
This strategy centers on quickly identifying persons who are or who may be ill and providing them with a safe and supported place in which to isolate if they have a COVID-19 diagnosis or quarantine if they suspect they have COVID-19. King County operates isolation and quarantine facilities in Seattle, Issaquah, and Kent
- *Strategy Three: Creating and Operating Short-Term, Emergency Capacity to Prevent Overwhelming Hospitals during Periods of Peak Illness*
This strategy creates and operates large-scale emergency capacity to test and provide care in facilities known as assessment and recovery centers (AC/RC). Three first-of-their kind AC/RC facilities were constructed by King County in Shoreline, Bellevue (Eastgate), and Seattle (SoDo).

Cumulatively, the strategies described in this report have so to date produced twenty-three new (by construction or use) facilities deployed across King County.

At this time, given the lack of a vaccine, the most effective strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to keep people from contracting it in the first place. Within the context of an unprecedented public health emergency in which the nation and world have seen hundreds of thousands of persons perish and millions of persons become ill, the movement of County residents from high-risk congregate shelters to the hotel in Renton has succeeded so far in the community-wide goal to slow the spread of COVID-19. There have been approximately 200 COVID-19 tests administered at the hotel in Renton; to date there has not been a single positive test among the hotel residents, while there have been upward of 184 COVID cases associated with homeless service facilities.

While the hotel in Renton has to date succeeded in meeting its goal of promoting public health by reducing the risk to vulnerable shelter residents who do not otherwise have a home in which to follow public health guidance, the County recognizes that the hotel has also had impacts for the City of Renton. Among the actions taken by the County to support Renton include:

- Granting the city's request for additional support for the Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches (REACH), a local homelessness services provider, with DCHS providing up to \$47,000 in additional funding for REACH operations, staff, and programming.
- Engaging in ongoing work sessions with DESC and leaders from Renton's City Manager's office, Fire and Police services, and Human Services office to collaboratively address operational improvements for the Renton hotel site.

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- Negotiating Memorandum of Understanding to memorialize agreements about the current and future use of the Renton hotel.

In addition, King County authorized \$500,000 in mitigation funds for cities to recover documented costs related to the County's isolation and quarantine sites, assessment and recovery sites and shelter deintensification sites.

As King County, DESC, and the City of Renton continue to work together to improve operations at the hotel, identify and mitigate impacts to the community, and strengthen collaboration and partnership around both the COVID-19 emergency response and the longer-term homelessness emergency response, the underlying context and conditions of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency remain unchanged. Declarations and proclamations of emergency remain in effect. Numbers of persons who are ill and die from COVID-19 continue to increase, although the slower pace at which local numbers are growing is due to the collective “stay home, stay healthy” efforts of King County residents, institutions, businesses, and governments to flatten the curve.

The entire region’s individual, social, and public health—and the region’s ability to restore economic and social activity—depends upon the region’s collective capacity to keep slowing the spread of COVID-19, to prevent wherever possible the loss of human life and health, and to strengthen partnerships and shared purpose until the underlying medical realities of the disease change such that the threat to individual and collective health and our shared economy is substantially reduced.

The work outlined in this report furthers the King County Strategic Plan goal of improving the health and well-being of all people in our community.

It is estimated that the report required 35 staff hours to produce, costing approximately \$3,541.

Thank you for your consideration of this report. If your staff have any questions, please contact Leo Flor, Director of the Department of Community and Human Services at 206-477-4384.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

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Leo Flor, Director, Department of Community and Human Services

Anthony Wright, Director, Facilities Management Division, Executive Services