



Legislation Text

File #: 2004-0240, **Version:** 1

A MOTION adopting the policy framework to guide the King County executive in the development of a plan for a long-term approach to locating Tent City 4, in collaboration with Seattle Housing and Resource Effort and the Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League and faith-based and not-for-profit community organizations in King County; and directing the county executive to negotiate with Seattle Housing and Resource Effort and the Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League for future use of nonpark county-owned property under certain conditions while the long-term plan is in development.

WHEREAS, homelessness is recognized as a growing problem in King County and elsewhere in the nation, and

WHEREAS, an estimated eight thousand King County residents experience homelessness on any given night, and

WHEREAS, thirty-eight people died out of doors while homeless in 2003, and

WHEREAS, King County finds it unacceptable that people are dying on the streets of our community because they have no safe alternative location, and

WHEREAS, King County government is an active participant of the regional Committee to End Homelessness in King County seeking permanent housing alternatives and supportive services, and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Housing and Resource Effort ("SHARE") and the Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League ("WHEEL") are nonprofit organizations that advocate and provide services for homeless persons, and

WHEREAS, SHARE/WHEEL has established Tent City 3 in Seattle to provide a safe community for up to one hundred homeless persons every night, and

WHEREAS, Tent City 3 is self-governing, complies with all health and fire regulations, and the residents live by a strict code of conduct providing a drug-free, alcohol-free, and respectful environment, and

WHEREAS, SHARE/WHEEL has successfully worked with churches and neighborhoods to provide acceptable locations for Tent City 3 within the city of Seattle, and the site moves approximately every ninety days, and

WHEREAS, SHARE/WHEEL wants to add a Tent City 4 within King County and has asked King County to provide an appropriate site, and

WHEREAS, the metropolitan King County council unanimously approved a budget proviso as part of the 2004 King County parks and recreation division budget that restricted expenditure of fifty thousand dollars of the parks division annual operating budget until the county executive had certified to the county council that at least three suitable county owned or controlled sites had been proposed to SHARE/WHEEL, along with any necessary authorizing legislation, and

WHEREAS, the King County executive vetoed this provision of the council-adopted 2004 budget given that county park properties are not suitable locations for a ninety-day encampment and as a matter of policy because temporary measures such as tent cities do not address the underlying causes of homelessness, and

WHEREAS, the county executive recognizes, however, the immediate need in our region for temporary solutions and that a tent city alternative is preferable to life on the streets while long-term solutions are pursued, and

WHEREAS, at the time of the veto, the King County executive pledged to continue working on long-term permanent housing solutions and also to develop a list of nonparks county owned properties for consideration by the county council, and

WHEREAS, on December 11, 2003, the county council requested that the county executive expedite

action on this priority issue, and

WHEREAS, the county executive entered into discussions with SHARE/WHEEL to identify appropriate nonparks alternative properties that met their criteria of sites including that the land be located on King County property within half a mile of a transit stop and with an open, flat space at least half the size of a football field for camping, and

WHEREAS, SHARE/WHEEL announced in early April that they intended to occupy a King County park on May 6, 2004, for the purpose of creating Tent City 4 if other alternatives were not available, and

WHEREAS, the King County executive departments have identified a list of potential sites both in unincorporated King County and within cities that generally met the criteria outlined by SHARE/WHEEL and are presented as an attachment to this motion, and

WHEREAS, the potentially suitable county owned properties meet the SHARE/WHEEL criteria and will not significantly impact other King County operations, and

WHEREAS, the use of any of these sites for the purpose of a tent city is likely to raise concerns from the community and may require a temporary use permit depending on the selected location, and

WHEREAS, there is no general King County policy affirming use of King County properties for a tent city nor are any of these county owned sites specifically authorized to provide this type of temporary housing function, and

WHEREAS, the King County executive plans to continue to work with SHARE/WHEEL to develop a long-term proposal for locating Tent City 4 in a manner that best meets the Tent City 4 residents' needs and to elevate the visibility of the problem of homelessness throughout the King County region in pursuit of permanent solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to seek policy direction from the metropolitan King County council as to the suitability of King County-owned sites and as to the terms and conditions of the county's agreement with SHARE/WHEEL for access and use of nonparks county-owned property, and as to the policy criteria and

objectives that should be pursued in developing a long-term plan for locating Tent City 4;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The metropolitan King County council authorizes the county executive to enter into an agreement with SHARE/WHEEL to allow for the Tent City 4 on nonparks county-owned property as long as the following terms and conditions are included in the agreement:

1. No tent cities will be set up in any King County park;
2. SHARE/WHEEL will assume responsibility for Tent City residents' behavior, and to the extent allowed by law hold the county harmless for injuries or property loss occurring within or as a result of Tent City;
3. SHARE/WHEEL will move the Tent City to other properties within ninety days; and
4. SHARE/WHEEL will enforce its code of conduct at all times that prohibits the use of drugs and alcohol inside the encampment, prohibits weapons, violence, or open flames inside the encampment, and requires Tent City residents to respect each other and their neighborhood at all times and, if the code of conduct is not upheld, the agreement may be terminated by the county and the tent city will immediately exit King County property; and

B. The metropolitan King County council directs the county executive to actively work on a long-term plan for locating Tent City 4 and sets forth the following policy framework to guide King County's participation in the development of that plan:

1. The county executive shall work with faith-based groups, community organizations and not-for-profits to identify non-county-owned properties as the preferred option for siting Tent City 4;
2. All suitable county owned locations in incorporated and unincorporated King County including the city of Seattle should be evaluated as possible sites;
3. In addition to community, faith based and not-for-profit organizations, all municipal jurisdictions should be invited to participate in this endeavor as homelessness is a regional problem. City participation in the

plan's development and implementation shall be encouraged from the outset and the county executive should pursue vigorous outreach to any cities with potential sites within their jurisdictions;

4. The effort should include identification of multiple ways for public, private, and not-for-profit organizations to support Tent City 4 including but not limited to locating Tent City 4 at their locations and to providing in-kind or cash support to the operation of the tent city; and

5. The long-term plan for locating Tent City 4 should be clearly linked to the county's role in the Committee to End Homelessness and the need to create permanent housing specifically to help low-income individuals and families.