

**York Neighborhood Association
General Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2016, 7pm
at Garden St. Methodist Church**

The meeting was preceded by a Harvest Soup Supper at 6:30pm

Vice President Tom Scott called the meeting to order at 7pm

I. The meeting focused on Homelessness in Bellingham with a showing of the video, "The Trifecta: Mental Health, Addiction, and Homelessness."

II. Panelists were introduced: Mayor Kelli Linville; Mike Parker, Director, Homeless Service Center; Kate Robertson, Street Outreach Team Lead; Officer Eric Osterkamp, Bellingham Police Dept.; and Steve Nordeen, Grounds Supervisor, Bellingham Parks and Rec Dept.

Mayor Linville introduced Katie Franks, Community Development Dept., who will be taking the lead for the city on homelessness issues. Bellingham has invested in its Housing First programs. A new "low barrier" shelter recently opened. The Mayor continues to be concerned about the 1% vacancy rate in Bellingham (the accuracy of that statistic was strongly questioned by some audience members).

Kate Robertson explained how the coordinated entry system works. Steve Nordeen explained that citizens need to call 911 when homeless camps are discovered in the parks. There are 200 camps in the city. Costs for clean-up run as high as \$26,000 per year. Citizens should call Langley West, City Enforcement Officer, to report problems: 778-8735

II. Q&A Audience questions included:

There is concern about lack of rent control and Bellingham's rising rental rates; fewer Section 8 houses appear to be available; are there too many different organizations involved in the homeless issue; concerns were voiced that much of the safety net is structured long after the slide into homelessness has started, actually at the very bottom, and might have been addressed more effectively and cheaply earlier in the slide; storage lockers might be helpful for homeless people to store their belongings; the idea of "safe camps" is being addressed by agencies; would like to see the Mayor commit to enforcement of existing zoning regulations to help keep rents down.

The meeting adjourned at 9pm

Minutes submitted by Anne Mackie, Secretary/Treasurer

Minutes approved by the Board, 12/7/2016