



City and Borough of Juneau  
City & Borough Manager's Office  
155 South Seward Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Telephone: 586-5240 | Facsimile: 586-5385

TO: CBJ Assembly  
DATE: October 23, 2023  
FROM: Robert Barr, Deputy City Manager  
RE: Cold Weather Emergency Shelter (CWES)

### **Background**

In October of 2017, the Assembly Taskforce on Homelessness concluded its work and recommended<sup>1</sup>, among other things, the creation of the CWES. Starting the winter of 2017, CBJ has been operating a CWES in partnership with local community non-profit organizations.

In 2017 and 2018, the shelter was operated out of the old public safety building located at 450 Whittier St and operated under a shared services model comprised of CBJ staff and staff from AWARE, the Glory Hall, and St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP). The shelter served up to 30 individuals during cold weather nights (lows below 32F). In these first two years, the shelter was open for about 75 nights per winter and served about 170 unique individuals. In 2017 a total of 715 bed nights were provided and in 2018 a total of 1,612 bed nights.

In 2019 the service model for the CWES was changed from shared-lead to single-organization lead and began operating every night. St. Vincent de Paul was the lead organization and began providing services out of their Teal St. location. In March of 2020, with the onset of the pandemic, the CWES was moved to the JACC to decompress the smaller Teal St location. Throughout the winters of 2019 and 2020, a total of 21,000 bed nights of service were provided.

In July through September of 2020, CBJ sought proposals to purchase a facility to be used for a cold weather shelter in the future. Eight locations were considered, and none selected.

For the winters that began in 2021 and 2022, CWES services were provided by Resurrection Lutheran Church (RL) at their downtown location. In 2021, 3,535 bed nights of service were provided.

### **Discussion**

In June of 2023, a request for bids was issued for a CWES operator for the winter season. Despite a well-attended pre-proposal meeting, no bids were received. Potential operators mostly indicated inability to find an appropriate space to house the shelter and RL indicated they did not bid due to congregational vote.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://juneau.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-10-22-COW\\_HomelessTaskforcerecommendations\\_final.pdf](https://juneau.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-10-22-COW_HomelessTaskforcerecommendations_final.pdf)

After the failed bid, staff met with RL to determine if enough changes could be made to the bidding documents to enable re-consideration and a second vote by the congregation. RL staff determined that was possible; however, a second vote failed. At this point, staff began considering alternative options for this winter's operations. Nearly all CBJ owned facilities and many private facilities were considered. The major criteria for a CWES facility include:

- Large<sup>2</sup> open space with good sight lines
- Heated, covered
- Restrooms that are designed and/or controllable in a manner to disincentivize drug/alcohol use
- Potable water available and staff electricity/connectivity
- Transportation plans – PM and AM

Facilities meeting these criteria that are also available (e.g. no or limited disruption to current use) are rare. Facilities outside of downtown were initially ruled out due to the added transportation complexity and cost; however, once it became clear that no appropriate facilities existed downtown, we began exploring those options. Mt. Jumbo gym and Thane warehouse were the two CBJ owned facilities that rose to the top that could be modified to suit the needs of the CWES. Thane warehouse has an advantage over Mt. Jumbo gym as well as RL in that it is not adjacent to a residential neighborhood or an elementary school, neither of which should ideally be sited near an emergency shelter.

During this process, RL held a third vote which passed by a single vote. With input from community providers and involved CBJ departments, staff decided to proceed with the Thane option in partnership with SVDP.

It is worth noting that the CWES is a shelter of last resort and the lowest barrier shelter option in Juneau. It is not a no barrier shelter. We have an obligation to ensure a safe environment for staff, clients, and surrounding neighbors. Making enforcement decisions is challenging and is done using a safety-focused lens. Refusing services for behavioral reasons (threatened or actual violence, active drug use, extreme/persistent disruption) means that individual may be left with no other warming option on a cold night. On the other hand, failing to trespass an individual when all other options have been exhausted can result in an unmanageable/unsafe situation for others in and around the facility. SVDP staff are trained in de-escalation techniques, supported by partner agencies including CBJ emergency services, and seek to minimize refusing service to the greatest extent possible. In extreme and/or specific circumstances, other options may exist (e.g. CARES sobering center, BRH, and LCCC).

### **Recommendation:**

Adopt Ordinance 2023-39 after public hearing or provide alternative direction.

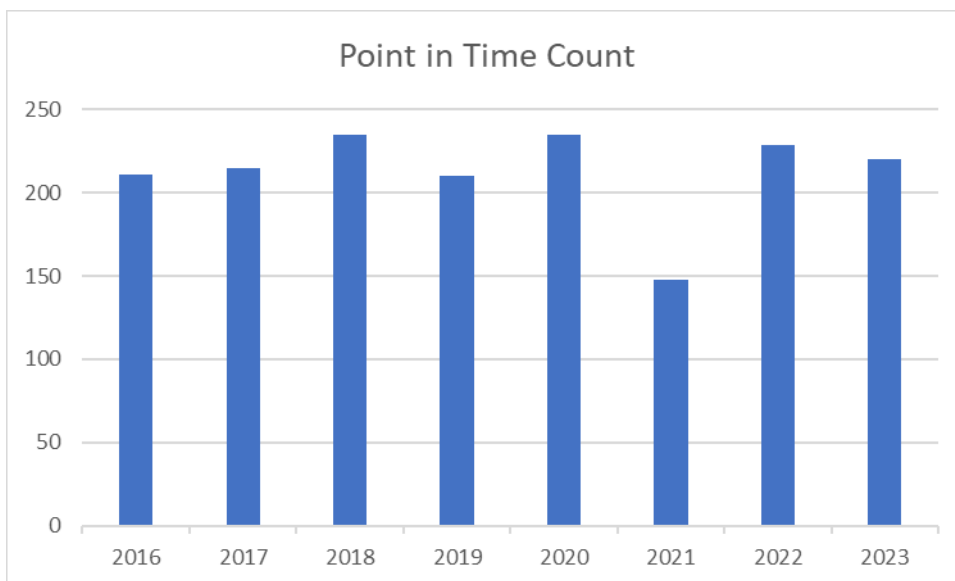
### **Addenda:**

---

<sup>2</sup> The FEMA/Red Cross Shelter Field Guide recommends 40 square feet per person with additional allowances for people requiring assistive aid and staff. 60 square feet per person is ideal and improves safety.



This graph tracks CBJ spending related to addressing homelessness since FY13. Included are grants to providers<sup>3</sup> that address homelessness and/or low income housing as part of their mission, social service grants to organizations that provide wrap-around services to people experiencing homelessness, contractual and personnel costs associated with the CWES, the Shéiyi X̄aat Hít youth shelter, CARES services, medical respite, and COVID-19 spending directly related to housing and vulnerable population support. The majority of COVID-19 expenses occurred in FY21 which is why it appears as an outlier.

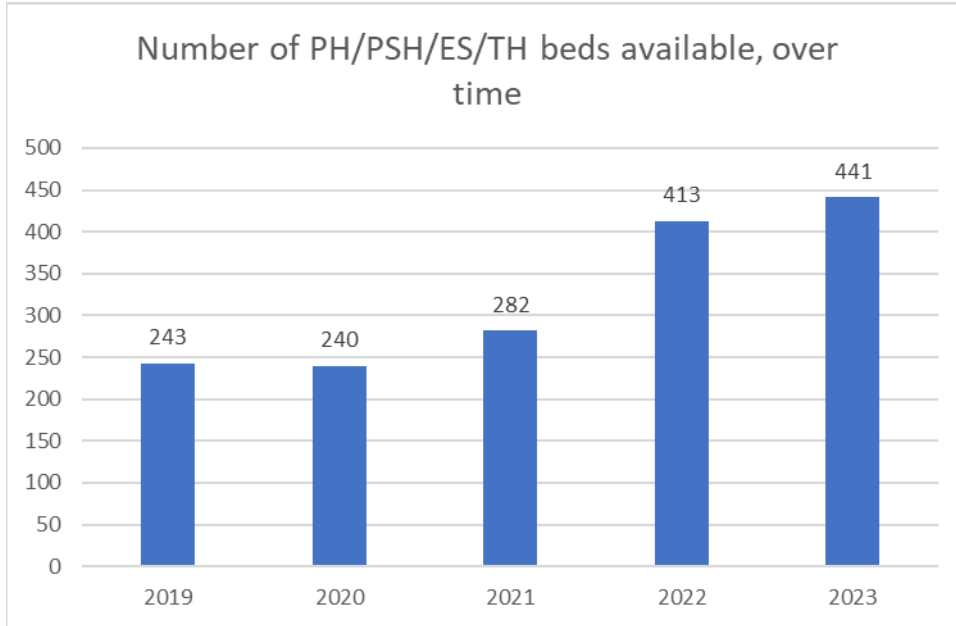


This graph reflects the “point in time” count<sup>4</sup>, which is an annual counting of people experiencing homelessness across a handful of different categories, generally occurring in January of each year. The categories included in this graph include individuals staying in emergency sheltering,

<sup>3</sup> The Glory Hall, AWARE, St. Vincent de Paul, Housing First, THRHA, Family Promise

<sup>4</sup> Data available here: <https://icalliances.org/alaska-data-and-reports>

transitional housing, and those who are unsheltered. Due to the pandemic, unsheltered numbers were not recorded in 2021.



This graph shows the total number of Permanent Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Emergency Sheltering, and Transitional Housing beds available in the community, over time. The growth from 2020 to 2021 reflects the expansion of Housing First. The growth from 2021 to 2022 is largely driven by a new allocation of housing vouchers from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation which are intended to be temporary in nature, providing up to 12 months of rental stabilization assistance.