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**Date: August 30, 2023**

**To: Tim Burton, City Manager**

**Subject: Emergency Housing Working Group Update**

Following the August 10, 2023, Homelessness Discussion with Local Non-Profits meeting, the participants decided to hold a follow-up discussion with individuals who were willing to work on the specific task of temporary, emergency shelter options for the upcoming winter nights. Jeff Buscher, Community Impact Coordinator at United Way of the Lewis & Clark Area, volunteered to head up the working group, providing the agenda and leading the discussion.

The Emergency Housing Working Group met on August 24, 2023, to define the purpose of the specific group and brainstorm potential locations. Community members listed potential locations and businesses or buildings they knew were currently vacant or for sale.

Michael O'Neil, Executive Director at Helena Housing Authority, provided information about possible options for flexibility with HUD housing vouchers in the event there is a location that can meet the requirements for usage. Discussions included whether a hotel room apartment approach could be feasible within the confines of the voucher program. If specific requirements are met, this approach could be feasible for permanent housing (not emergency) for some of the individuals who are currently struggling to find housing.

Theresa Ortega, Executive Director at Good Samaritan Ministries, mentioned a potential emergency shelter opportunity with the building where Our Place is currently located. Discussions included scheduling time with Building Division staff to walk through the space to provide information on building codes and other considerations for converting a portion(s) of the building to such a use.

City staff discussed the parks and other properties under their ownership. Currently, there are no vacant buildings owned by the City which could be used as emergency shelter. City planning staff shared an interactive map that was created to highlight the properties within the city limits identified by the Montana Department of Revenue as vacant. City staff also provided information regarding building/fire code and general safety for locations where individuals would be sleeping.

Lewis and Clark County staff were also in attendance. Staff indicated that there currently are not any vacant buildings owned by the County which could be used as emergency shelter. The Fairgrounds were mentioned as a possible location, and staff indicated that camping is available according to the terms required at the location. One parcel of land just outside the city limits was mentioned by the group; however, it is located very close to the water treatment facility and far from the social service providers many in the unhoused community rely on.

For the next meeting, the following contacts will be made:

- Theresa Ortega (GSM) will investigate possibilities at Our Place
- Jeff Buscher (UWLCA) will talk with the owners about the adult care center at the St. John's location
- Emily McVey (UWLCA) will visit with Peter Sangawan at the Shiloh Inn/Helena Inn

The next Emergency Housing Working Group meeting will be held on September 7, 2023, at 10AM in the City/County Building (Room 326) and virtually on Zoom. Link provided below.

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fus06web.zoom.us%2Fj%2F87685512940&data=05%7C01%7CAPICHETTE%40helenamt.gov%7Cac1b20a23e8a425f2a5208dba4c61353%7Cf71022133f944d938972b17e2d49aa8f%7C0%7C0%7C638284942880160592%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LA43WQzdFykYqfR29B7qbiAu088wVew7UX79I7OS6rw%3D&reserved=0>

The next meeting will include follow-up information from discussions on the three potential locations identified at the August 24th meeting.