

## Emergency Shelter Community Information Session Script

*Meeting starts at 6:00 p.m.*

*Introduction to meeting - Ashley T-C*

**ASHLEY:** *Good evening everyone, we are here tonight to discuss the proposed emergency shelter at the Ramada Inn near River Ridge in East Asheville. This is going to be a question and answer informational session. We've received quite a few questions from the community and would like to provide as much information as we can at this point. We will be addressing questions received in advance. Let's do a round of introductions for our panel members.*

*Allow panel members to introduce themselves- All (Ashley T-C can call on members)*

*Opening description of what the City is doing right now with this initiative -*

**CATHY:**

- **Since COVID**
  - **Harrah's shelter - Congregate**
  - **Red Roof Inn - Non-congregate**
- **Safety issues in encampments in city parks - created safety for people using the park, adjoining neighborhoods and campers. These areas had high call volumes for police. Evaluated the need to keep campers, parks and neighborhoods safe utilized American Rescue Fund Money to move folks into hotel rooms.**
- **Based on previous experience at the Red Roof Inn data.**
- **City has a contract to purchase the Ramada Inn and the adjacent parcel for the purpose of an emergency homeless shelter**
- **City plans to improve security on the site by**
  - **Installing decorative secure fencing**
  - **Adding lighting**
  - **Filling in the swimming pool**
  - **Constructing sidewalk**
- **Wrap around services**
  - **Mental and substance abuse counseling**
  - **Job assessment**
  - **Medical Health needs**

*What is the City seeking to accomplish through creating the emergency shelter? - Emily, with Ashley L and Tara contributing*

*What are some lessons learned from the current shelter operations? - Ashley L and Tara*

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Q&A period: read out questions and direct them to panel members. Other members may chime in as they see fit. Questions are organized per category. - **Ashley T-C**

### **Project History & Background**

**(Ashley T-C) - ASHLEY:** *We'd like to begin with some questions around the history and background of the proposed emergency shelter at the Ramada Inn.*

1. What have been some of the successes that you've seen with people in shelter right now?- **Tara and Ashley L.**
2. What have been some of the challenges that you've seen? - **Ashley L., Tara**
3. Why did the City decide that this is a good location for this shelter? **Cathy**
  - a. **Current Regional Business Zoning allows for Shelter as a Use By Right**
  - b. **No single family residential zoning contiguous to the property**
  - c. **Close proximity, within walking distance, to Walmart, pharmacy, and other food / retail services**
  - d. **Located on a transit line and directly adjacent to bus stop**
  - e. **Move-in ready: the current hotel can be used as a shelter with minimum upfits**
  - f. **Rooms accessed via interior hallway, 2 story walk-up / no elevator**
  - g. **Sale of property includes all furnishings**
  - h. **Vacant 2+ acre outparcel for new construction of additional rooms / offices**
  - i. **Right-sized price and right-sized conditions for proposed us**
4. Why has this happened without any community involvement? **Cathy**
  - a. **Meeting with adjacent property owners since the end of May**
5. Some feel the city must address homelessness in a more permanent way rather than temporary housing that does not address the root problems our city and its population faces. Why does the City believe this shelter is needed in our community? **Emily**
6. We've had some community members who describe trying to help homeless people in their neighborhood who then refuse the help and say they don't want to go to a shelter. Why would we need more shelters in this case? **Emily, ask if Ashley L has anything to add.**

### **Safety**

**(Ashley T-C)** - *We understand that safety is a top concern for many community members. We'd like to ask some questions and read some emails we've received on the topic.*

1. Neighboring property owners have reported more used needles, litter, graffiti, dumpster activity, theft and crime in the area since the temporary shelter has been in operation. How do you respond to that? **EMILY**

**READ ALL EMAILS THEN THROW TO PANEL**

Now let's read some emails about safety....

1. The first email reads: "I live in the Verde Vista and absolutely do not want more homeless issues around it. I pay way too much money for my community to be trashed like half of what Asheville has already become! I work close by and see enough drugs, needles, homeless causing problems, weapons, cars being broken into, alcohol and trash. Asheville is turning into an unsafe slum."
2. Another question reads: "Please tell me how security for the neighborhood homes, businesses and school can be properly provided given a low barrier shelter will not require ID's, will not administer drug or sobriety tests and will even allow its patrons to check their weapons at night and retrieve them the next day as they leave?"
3. Next: "The Shelter does not allow residents to bring drugs, alcohol or firearms into the shelter, but the residents have taken those activities into the neighborhood with drug deals going down in the parking lots and needles littering the sidewalks. What are the city's plans for discontinuing these practices?"
4. 'If this is approved, what level of security is guaranteed to prevent crime in the area?"
5. Given the issues raised in these emails, how would the panel respond to these safety concerns? **Cathy, ALL PANEL**
  - a. ***Totally understand the concerns. We want everyone to feel safe. We have asked that our police staff evaluate the site to tell us how to be safe neighbors. Based on their recommendations we are prepared to make the security changes as well as having security on site.***
  - b. ***As mentioned earlier, the main way to do this is by having controlled access. Providing the fence, sidewalk and lighting have been recommended by APD.***
  - c. ***Important for our population experiencing homelessness to learn to be good neighbors.***

### Operations

**(Ashley T-C)** - Many people had specific questions about how the shelter will be operated. We'd like to address those questions now.

1. Who will run it? **Emily**
2. Who can check people in? Police, fire, other referrals? **Emily**
3. What kind of services will be onsite at the new shelter? **Emily, potential to call on Ashley L or Tara**
4. Will there be services for walk-ins? Or only to those staying there? **Emily**
5. What is the meal arrangement? **Emily**
6. Are pets allowed in the rooms? **Emily**
7. What about rules or policies at the facility? **Emily**
8. Do you plan on any offering of training or job opportunities? **Tara**
9. How are you planning to ensure the accessibility, comfort, and safety of the shelter for transgender folks seeking shelter? **Emily**
10. Once the shelter is in operation, how can the community provide feedback to the City about what's working and what needs attention? **Cathy, Emily support**
  - a. **The proposal is to have a City staff person on-site to have an extra layer or connectivity to the community.**
  - b. **In addition to having a City staff person on site, we propose to have security and wrap around service providers on-site to help folks in crisis.**

### Impact

**(Ashley T-C)** - The last category of questions we have tonight is about the impact of the proposed shelter on homelessness, homeless individuals, and the community.

1. How will people graduate from this shelter to housing? **Emily**
2. What is the impact that this shelter will have on homelessness? **Emily**
3. How can you assure that these individuals will be self-supporting and be contributors to our community after they leave the shelter? **Tara and/ or Ashley L.**
4. Do you think this kind of facility would be a magnet for other homeless people from other places? **Cathy**
  - a. **Use data**
    - i. **Asheville: 77%**

- ii. **WNC: 9%**
  - iii. **NC: 2%**
  - iv. **Out of state: 12%**
5. Why would people be motivated to get jobs or move on if they have a hotel room the City is paying for? How long do you think their stay would be? **Ashley**
6. Some of the questions we've received want to know if there is an end date to this property being used as a shelter. What is the end date? Will this location always be a shelter when the City buys it? **Cathy**

### ***Closing***

***Ashley T-C Thank you panel and thank you to the community members who have sent in questions.***

We appreciate you listening by phone or watching live on YouTube to this community conversation. If you want to provide additional feedback to City staff please email [AVLendinghomelessness@publicinput.com](mailto:AVLendinghomelessness@publicinput.com).

(SLIDE)We had previously advertised an in-person meeting on Thursday, however due to Covid-19 concerns that meeting will now happen virtually.

Our next meeting will take place

From 5-7PM

If you would like to provide a public comment, please register at <https://publicinput.com/avlendinghomelessness>

Each registered caller will have 3 minutes to speak.

Thank you and have a good evening.

**(END STREAM)**