

RUN OF SHOW:

Intro by Ashley Traynum-Carson

Allow guests to introduce themselves

Cathy Ball - opens to what we are doing now

Emily talk about what we are trying to accomplish and invites Ashley and Tara to participate.

Turns to Ashley and Tara and talk about lessons learned from the current operations.

Then open the floor for questions:

Project History and Background

1. How did this shelter project come about? Who are you trying to serve with this shelter?
2. What have been some of the successes that you've seen with people in shelter right now?
3. What have been some of the challenges that you've seen?
4. 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 would the panel respond to this concern?
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?
6. Why did the City decide that this is a good location for this shelter?
7. Why has this happened without any community involvement?
8. 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?

OPERATIONS

Let's talk about the operations of the shelter.

1. Who will run it?
2. Who can check people in? Police, fire, other referrals?
3. What kind of services will be onsite at the new shelter?
4. Will there be services for walk ins? Or only to those staying there?
5. What is the meal arrangement?
6. Are pets allowed in the rooms?
7. What about rules or policies at the facility?

8. Do you plan on any offering of training or job opportunities?
9. Once the shelter is in operation, how can the community provide feedback to the City about what's working and what needs attention?

SAFETY

1. We've received a number of questions about safety in the area. This question reads: 'If this is approved, what level of security is guaranteed to prevent crime in the area?'
2. Another email about safety 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." How would the panel respond to this email?
3. Who will provide onsite security should a fight happen during the night?
4. Next question, from the email list: "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?"

IMPACT:

Ashley: We've also received questions about the future impact of this shelter.

1. What is the standard expectation for people to graduate from this shelter to housing? What is the measure of success?
2. What is the impact that this shelter will have on homelessness?
3. How can you assure or provide continuity to allow these individuals to be self supporting and be contributors to our community?
4. What impact do you think this will have on total individuals in homelessness? Do you think this kind of facility would be a magnet for other homeless people from other places?
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?
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?

CLOSING / WRAP UP:

In closing, are there any other concerns that you may have heard from the community?

Anything else that you would like to share?

1. What do you plan on doing with a person who stays there for a month, during the day. I understood many of the rooms will not have doors, so people can be observed. So when dawn breaks, and no breakfast is served (one meal a day will probably be at noon) they will walk out and dissolve into the neighborhoods, or the parking lot at Walmart. This is where the issues start.
 2. What about weapons, will they be searched and will guns and knives be taken away?
 3. What about a sex offender who has no form of id? Will he be in a room with no door next to a family?
 4. Will a family all be in the same room?
 5. What about all the lice they apparently have. If you go into Haywood church after a meal service the room is bleached, they hose the whole place down after food service every day to get rid of the various lice.
 6. What about a flea ridden dog, after it has spent the night in the shelter. Most of the dogs I see are not neutered, so that they are more aggressive, are these animals even house broken, if they need to use the bathroom in the middle of the night what happens. Will the dogs guard their owners and not allow a person who works there into the room.
 7. Who is going to clean up the rooms, who will pay for that? Are the shelter residents going to be taught how to clean up after themselves?
 8. How often will linens get washed, who is going to wash them. Are shelter residents going to be told to clean up their rooms and help with laundry.
 9. Where are you going to get the funds from to keep this going.
 10. Seattle was quoted as having a center like this, but they have one of the worst homeless populations out there, along with Portland LA and NY.
 11. Will there be ANY rules at all?
 12. Who will provide onsite security should a fight happen during the night? APD should not be responsible for this.
 13. The 6 acres of land which comes with this property ultimately be given to a developer for \$1 for affordable housing.
 14. The micro housing which is being proposed adjacent to my neighborhood has 80 units on 0,33 of an acre, in a now parking lot. So will 6 acres ultimately house 1440 units at 2 people per which is 2880 people? Is this the end game plan? These proposed as rooms and showers with communal kitchens and common rooms, no parking provided.
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Public Comments

EMAILS FROM RESIDENTS FROM PUBLIC INPUT

1. Hello,

I am a resident of the Oakley Neighborhood here in Asheville. I am absolutely AGAINST the city's purchase of the Ramada Inn to house our homeless neighbors. The location is not near any social services nor is it on a convenient bus line. I also worry about it's proximity to the large homeless camp and what this shelter will mean for the safety and security of our children and neighborhood.

Is there not another hotel that better serves our homeless sisters and brothers that is closer to social services?

2. I have questions about Asheville's potential purchase and repurposing of the Ramada Inn on 148 River Ford Parkway in the Oakley area of Asheville.

~~1) If this is approved, what level of security is guaranteed to prevent crime in the area (I live very close to the Ramada in question)? Not "promised" -- guaranteed.~~

~~2) If this is approved, what is the timeline for this to occur:~~

~~=> When will it begin (people occupying the Ramada)?~~

~~=> What is the end date? Not the "promised" end date -- the guaranteed end date.~~

~~3) What is the reason for choosing this specific location?~~

I am expecting clear and detailed answers to my questions. I was informed of this meeting today -- after the in-person meeting occurred, and I am expecting clear communications.

~~3. Please define "Complex Needs" and "On-Site Services"~~

~~4. I AM HIGHLY AGAINST THIS!~~

~~I live in the Verde Vista apartments 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.~~

~~Do not continue to encourage this!~~

5. I am in strong favor of the shelter.

6. Good Afternoon, I am a resident of the Beverly Hills community. Can you please forward or direct me to the independent community impact study performed recently addressing the impact this will have on the community. Thank You
7. ~~Why was this meeting announced only one working day before it is to be held?~~
 - a. ~~The Red Roof Inn, where the city so successfully moved slightly more than a quarter of the population into permanent housing, is not located next to a densely populated area. Why are you trying to locate an emergency shelter next to two densely populated apartment complexes plus a shopping center frequented by families?~~
 - b. ~~Why is the city trying to destabilize a peaceful middle class neighborhood?~~
 - c. ~~The Ramada Inn 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?~~
 - d. ~~Since the shelter went in, there is constant vagarency in the apartment complexes. What are the city's plans for stopping that? Also Thievery, littering etc. I look forward to your answers tonight.~~
8. How are you planning to ensure the accessibility, comfort, and safety of the shelter for transgender folks seeking shelter?
9. Please tell me how security for the neighborhood homes, businesses and school can be properly provided given a low barrier shelter (by your own RFP's wording) 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?
10. What is the exact plan for administering and maintaining the Ramada inn as a homeless shelter? Not just a general statement "We will staff and maintain everything appropriately" but specifically how many staff will be hired, what is the plan for securing qualified staff, When will they be hired, what will they be paid?
 - a. Where can we get the detailed information about the funding for this project? Exactly how much comes from each source, when does it come? How long does it last? That is to say, after the first year, how will it be funded?
 - b. Since the plan is that people can come and go pretty much as they please day and night, what exactly are plans for keeping them from spilling over into the surrounding neighborhoods when they are not in the residence, when they have violated the few rules and have been expelled from the residence, or when they are just hanging around?
 - c. We know some of the people will have substance-abuse problems, and while many of these substances may be prohibited in the residence, this will not stop those people who need them from accessing them nearby, both to acquire and use them. Local residents and businesses are unlikely to appreciate this kind of behavior. How will you control for this?
11. I have lived in Buncombe County all my life. I do not understand why Asheville feels the need to cater to the homeless. Most of them CHOOSE to live the way they do. I have 3 homeless camps near my home, they are THEIVES, THEY ARE VERY TRASHY, AND

HARASS HOME OWNERS. You are going to run the natives of Asheville out to cater all the homeless!! OUR TOWN LOOKS NASTY BECAUSE OF ALL THE BEGGING HOMELESS!!

Received during August 9 Meeting

12. Do you know the approximate cost a contractor will charge to take the major risk and liability of running a low-barrier shelter and with a 30-day cancellation clause per your RFP? If anyone even responds to the RFP it will cost millions per year, maybe \$8-\$9 million.
13. How is the city planning to ensure minimum/acceptable impact to the surrounding businesses and homeowners with the shortage of law enforcement the city is experiencing?
 - a. Has the city planned a budget for the operation and maintenance of this proposed project? This should be shared as written. Please consider posting for review. Don't forget the need for removal of biohazard/medical waste.
 - b. Have security needs been considered for the operation of this location? Upkeep and cleaning of the facility and surrounding area, parking lot, etc.
 - c. Why would the city enter into a long-term project with implications of major upkeep to an aging facility?
14. As I write this, it is 638 pm Aug. 9. I've been listening/watching since 600 pm and I haven't heard a single actual answer to any of the questions. There have been a lot of generalities and aspirations, but not one actual description of what's happening or will happen on the ground — now. Please provide specific answers to questions. Gene Charleton Gene28803(at)gmail.com 979.229.2716 (mobile) 828.505.2230 (landline)
15. Do I understand what I think I heard from the city of Asheville staffers and others answering questions: that the city has no management on site at the Ramada but homeless folks are living there now? How does this work in real life? It sounds risky and dangerous. Gene Charleton

ACT article:

~~But Derek Allen, an attorney representing River Ridge, said the shopping center has seen a deterioration of conditions around the hotel and fears there will be more.~~

~~"Since the city starting housing the homeless at the Ramada Inn, we have seen a sharp increase in public safety issues. Drug needles are commonly found. Prostitution has become rampant. Shoplifting is comically common and become expected. Drug dealers frequent the Ramada Inn to prey on those with substance abuse issues. Rarely a day goes by when an ambulance, police car or fire truck is not at the center for one reason or another."~~

~~Allen said said the city had not been transparent, lacked plans for the shelter and that it was an attempt to "clumsily hide homeless from downtown tourists."~~

CAN MEETING: August 4, 2021

Questions & Feedback:

Barber: Problem with ppl that want help and don't want help, ask them if we could help and they refuse help. Quite a few that refuse help, they were younger people. Don't hear about the security at the community, have concerns about that. Lined up with security with somebody that can do addiction counseling, little unfair that all money goes to this from the Feds.

Safety concerns: RR business association, two things about that list. Don't want to undermine that this is a problem. Could literally take you to anywhere in AVL and show you that this is happening. Our goal will be to improve that.

Barber: Been more problems, cars broken into. You're right, that is a problem, Chunns Cove, BUT here we are going to have it concentrated, as the City takes this on, they have all of the non-profits in place that we all know come with this problem. APD doesn't have the staff.

Cathy - we've asked the police if this is something that you support. Very supportive. Chief had one in his town. But when ppl are in camps then police can only respond when something big happens... so having people in one place is more effective.

Helen: Who will run it? And is it a wet shelter? Who can check ppl in? Police, fire, what is the criteria to get access to it?

After hours, comes only from crisis responders. Then otherwise could come from community, or self.

Alan: Rescue mission serving food. How will you protect those individuals who use this property for domestic violence? And services on site? Mental and physical care. What impact do you think this will have on total individuals in homelessness? Do you think this kind of facility would be a magnet for other homeless people from other places?

Rick:

Is this site a done deal? Or do you have any other sites in mind?

Can you share why this site scored the highest? Let's see the evaluation and understand how you think about it, and if appropriate we can challenge it.

Do you have a decent handle on the size of the population you are trying to handle? To take care of? AHOPE data

Of the unsheltered ppl, are some of them suitable for the Days Inn HB property?

Helen:

How long do you think their stay would be?

What is the meal arrangement and what about dogs?

Rick:

~~Will the sves there will available for walk ins? Or only to those staying there?~~

~~What is the standard expectation for people to graduate from this shelter to housing? What is the measure of success?~~

~~Was is a reasonable measure of success or what people will actually go back to being on the street?~~

~~Would the industry data give you a ballpark? That is an important number. Benchmark from other Cities on how many people you want to go through the program and what percentage are successfully moved out of homelessness. Don't want it to be a government program that lasts forever...~~

Send them the operational plan.....

~~Programmatic -- any offering of training or job opportunities?~~

~~How can you assure or provide continuity to allow these individuals to be self supporting and be contributors to our community? Do you plan on any offering of training or job opportunities?~~

~~Shelter intended to be a crisis response not a long term shelter, concerned about the continuity going forward.~~

~~Any cities nationally, internationally that you are looking to as models?
Grace in Ft. Lauderdale~~

~~Debbie: Why has this happened without any community involvement?~~

~~Started with the camps that we are clearing~~

Rick:

~~This shelter will be forever, right?~~

~~—We want to evolve it to continue to meet the needs of the community~~

~~Timeline of community meetings, press release~~

FULL Panel: In closing, what are some of the concerns that you have heard from the community and how would you respond?

Community Questions:

1. Maggie Charleton
828-505-2230

I understand that there is to be a public meeting this coming Thursday at the AVL East Library about the Ramada Inn serving as a low barrier homeless shelter. I have several questions I would like addressed at this meeting and/or before the meeting. There does not seem to be a lot of publicity on this project. I found out about it by chance. Not good.

1. Vaccinations-required for pets and people? Especially the COVID vaccine. How will pets be housed? Will they be required to be on leashes?

~~2. Will the facility be ADA compliant and accept LGBTQ people?~~

~~3. Will this facility be staffed 24/7 with medical people and counseling/crisis staff? Homeward Bound is going to staff the shelter on Tunnel Road. Who is going to staff this facility?~~

4. Is this shelter a permanent housing solution or will residents be transitioned out into other more permanent housing?

5. Will it house families?

6. Will convicted sex offenders be housed here?

7. Will there be cooking facilities?

8. Will there be an administrative Board made up of community partners?

9. Curfew?

10. Alcohol and overdose policy?

11. Will AA and NA meetings be conducted here?

This is just a start. You need to realize that store owners in River Ridge Marketplace are already finding an uptick in needles near their businesses. River Ridge is just becoming an active prosperous place again. How do you address this concern?

2. URSULA WREN:

My understanding is the people who are currently temporarily sheltered in hotels under Council initiatives are not having food provided to them by the city, and are instead relying on volunteer networks to provide meals. Can you confirm this?

Will the new budget item for operating costs include a budget for meals?

Perhaps the below can be discussed in the “Opening Statement” that we are not only looking at our City emails about this project but also looking at Social Media and local News Outlets to understand community concerns and provide answers and feedback.

From City of Asheville FB Posts about the Shelter. Difficult comments but is there something in the comment that is a question & can be addressed?

- Hope this helps someone who needs it, not the 20 somethings I see roaming Tunnel pimping young girls and snorting pills.
 - Who is this shelter for?
- BS waste of taxpayer money. Council made the deal under the table with no public input.
 - We are doing public input sessions this week
- At last nights and Tuesday nights meetings it sounds like they are trying to fast track this with little to no input from the surrounding community's or business's. How do enter a contract to purchase with out FIRST having approval from council?
 - Again, public input; Council is voting, hasn't already voted
- Would this be used for code purple nights or as a low barrier shelter?
 - Good question here.
- Comment about 24 Hour Security?

From Citizen Times Comments about Ramada Inn -

- Get ready East Asheville. The City Council and their lack of wisdom has done it again. The neighbors that border this property better sell out now. I have a property downtown that borders AHOPE ran by Homeward Bound. Destroyed fencing, trash, used drug needles and lots of fights is what I deal with. If you think complaining about it or calling the police does any good....think again. The City of Asheville and Homeward Bound does a TERRIBLE job of managing their properties now so I wonder why they think this will work any better.
 - Safety, Security question? RFP for Management?
- Great idea, however, the city should definitely also budget for a private security service to help mitigate the collateral issues it's causing in the shopping center.
 - Is the Shelter Coordinator the Point of Contact who will outreach to them as well as be available?
- So what's the plan to help long term?? Any help with rehab, addiction etc??
 - This is Days Inn article but interest in long term & services

WLOS

- A few stories but I can't find any comments at WLOS

Mountain Express

- No article on the Ramada and no comments on recent homeless articles