

ASWWU Local Lobby Day 2019

Agenda Items *COB Draft*****

Housing Affordability and Livability

ASWWU recognizes the troubling barriers that students and community members face in obtaining affordable, safe, and quality housing in Bellingham. Marginalized communities bear the worst effects of our housing policy, including segregation that leads to lack of access to resources, including quality education and public transportation. Bellingham faces a shockingly low vacancy rate that cripples the marketplace with landlords and rental companies that engage in predatory behaviors with their renters. Bellingham has the capacities to reign in excessive fees, enforce tenant rights and regulate a competitive housing market. We need to improve our housing policy to create a livable, sustainable, affordable city that benefits all.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Repeal Bellingham Municipal Code 20.08.020 language concerning the definitions of “family” from “not more than three unrelated persons,” to be instead in accordance with recommended safe occupancy limits.**

As ruled unconstitutional by: Yoder et al., v. City of Bowling Green, OH et al., U.S District Court, Case No. 3:17 CV 2321

- **Pass an ordinance to limit the total amount of non-refundable move-in fees as not to exceed the amount of the first full month’s rent.** Fees include but are not limited to: security deposits, application fees, holding fees, cosigner fees, and pet deposits.
Model Legislation: Seattle Ordinance No. 125222, upheld in *Rental Housing Association v. City of Seattle*, Superior Court of the State of Washington in and for the County of King, No. 17-2-13662-0

- **Allow and incentivize “infill toolkit” homes in all single-family zoned areas and city’s “Urban Villages” as described by the City of Bellingham’s current Comprehensive Plan.** These forms use less square footage, cost less to build, use less energy, and are generally more affordable than single detached homes.

Model Legislation: Redmond, WA PZC 21.20 “Affordable Housing”, Minneapolis 2040 Comp. Plan.

Equity and Inclusiveness

ASWWU recognizes a litany of injustice faced by the marginalized identities within Bellingham. We acknowledge our civic legacy was built on the abuses of land theft, exploitation of immigrant labor and violent racial tensions. Present-day inequality exists throughout Bellingham in often subversive and underreported forms. We are determine to identify and resolve economic inequalities among our low-income earners, along with the political inequalities of our marginalized and underrepresented populations. We support robust legislation in pursuit of eliminating poverty, discrimination, and injustice city-wide.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **To address the Birchwood food desert crisis, support an ordinance outlawing Restrictive Covenants that “run with the land,” declaring negative-use restrictions against public policy, void and unenforceable.**

Model: Madison, Wisconsin: MCO 28.147, “ Negative use restrictions prohibited as against public policy”

- **Implement a Homeless Bill of Rights, one that guarantees the rights of each homeless person to access basic requirements necessary for sustaining life including but not limited to: shelter, sanitation, medical care, clothing, and food. Additionally, amend the charge of the Neighborhood Code Compliance Officers to guarantee the right of the homeless to move freely in public places and pursue both secular and non-secular aid alternatives.**

Model: Traverse City, Michigan “Homeless Bill of Rights”

Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform

ASWWU recognizes a basic understanding: our criminal justice system is broken. Numerous sources detail the disproportionate rate incarceration and policing affects people of color, the mentally-ill and low-income earners. Across the country and here in Bellingham, we have seen troubling trends of mass incarceration, inhumane jailing, identity profiling, and underfunding or underestimation of our drug addiction and mental health crises. We support alternatives to incarceration, justice for all, and increased advocacy for the most vulnerable in our communities.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Support the asks of the Undocumented Community and their allies in calling for independent civilian police accountability by means of a Civilian Investigative Panel, extraneous of the Police Department with subpoena powers and independent counsel.**

Model: Chapter 11.5 of the Code of the City of Miami and Ordinance No. 12188 ("Ordinance").

Voting Accessibility

ASWWU believes that voting is a right and recognizes that many communities do not have the access they need to exercise this fundamental right. We believe the following recommendations will increase the amount of underrepresented communities and young people participating in elections and local governance.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Pass a resolution in support of statewide endeavors to implement ranked-choice voting for all municipal elections within the City of Bellingham and enact upon passage.**

Model: Washington HB 1722 “Local Options Bill”

Environmental Stewardship & Green Investment

ASWWU recognizes the people of Bellingham and our environment are interconnected and each depends on each other for long-term success. As Bellingham becomes more populated

and our economy grows, we recommend innovative solutions to deal with the onset of Climate Change, population booms, and pollution. We support investing in clean energy and continually pursuing the highest standards for environmental justice, public health and sustainability. We must work in tandem with our environment to support prosperity through policies protecting safe and clean drinking water, farmland, salmon and the people who depend on them. Additionally, we must honor the highest law of the land, the treaties with our tribes.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Adopt a Net Zero Building Code mandating “carbon neutrality” in all future developments and redevelopments.** Incentivize bonuses for weatherization, lowering energy and utility draws, and other sustainable building practices, in order to achieve the city's 100% renewable energy targets and carbon neutrality before 2050.

Model: COB Climate Action Plan Taskforce and the 2018 Climate Action Plan