

ASWWU Local Lobby Day 2019

Agenda Items ***Whatcom Co. Draft***

Housing Affordability and Livability

ASWWU recognizes the troubling barriers that students and community members face in obtaining affordable, safe, and quality housing in Whatcom County. 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. Whatcom County faces a shockingly low vacancy rate that cripples the marketplace and has allowed landlords and rental companies to engage in predatory behaviors with their renters. Whatcom County has the capacities to reign in excessive fees and incentivize affordable housing around its urban centers, to regulate a more competitive housing market. We need to improve our housing policy to create a livable, sustainable, affordable county that benefits all.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Create a regulatory framework that prioritizes inclusionary zoning for developers to build affordable units.** Examples of incentives include expedited developmental review, density credits, regulatory concessions and fee waivers.
Model Legislation: Montgomery County, Maryland (1974)

Equity and Inclusiveness

ASWWU recognizes a litany of injustice faced by the marginalized identities within Whatcom County. 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 Whatcom County in often subversive and underreported forms. We determine to identify and resolve economic inequalities among our low-income earners and political inequality of our marginalized and underrepresented populations. We encourage robust legislation in pursuit of eliminating poverty, discrimination, and injustice county-wide.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- **Secure operational funding for the “Whatcom County Mental Health/ Drug and Alcohol Treatment Stabilization Center” that allows for continuous operation as opposed to fee-for-service funding only.**

Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform

ASWWU recognizes a basic understanding: our criminal justice system is broken. Numerous sources detail the disproportionate rate that incarceration and policing affect people of color, the mentally-ill and low-income earners. Across the country and here in Whatcom County, we have seen troubling trends of mass incarceration, inhumane jailing, identity profiling, and underfunding or underestimation to drug 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:

- **Provide comprehensive sentencing reform to reduce incarceration.** Examples of alternatives to incarceration include: expansion of electronic home monitoring, reduction of bail and pretrial incarceration, and decriminalization of low-level offenses.

Model: Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Taskforce

- **Reject the Whatcom County Sheriff's proposal to repeal Whatcom County Code 1.28, "Standards for Correctional Facilities." Create a joint civilian sub-committee to oversee the necessary revisions of WCC 1.28.**

Voting Accessibility

ASWWU believes that voting is a right and recognizes that many communities do not have the access they need in order for this to be true. 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 countywide elections within Whatcom County and enact upon passage.**

Model: Washington HB 1722/ SB 5708 "Local Options Bill",

Environmental Stewardship & Green Investment

ASWWU recognizes the people of Whatcom County and our environment are interconnected and each depends on each other for long-term success. As Whatcom County 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 endlessly pursue 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:

- **Update the Whatcom County Code to move fossil fuel industries, like those at the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area, from permitted use to conditional use.** Such language would strengthen the County's oversight in accountability assessments and shift the burden of proof in detailing risks to public health, safety and the environment from Whatcom County citizens to the refineries.

- **Reduce the number of housing units planned in rural areas by adopting a density credit model.** Furthermore, urge Whatcom County cities to adopt interlocal agreements that prioritize the preservation of agricultural and rural land.

Model: Transfer of Development Rights/ Purchase of Development Rights Work Group recommendations.

- **Implement an adequate stormwater rate fee structure in the Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility District to provide the necessary funding to preserve and protect the water quality of Lake Whatcom and its watershed.**

Model: City of Bellingham MC 15.15.04 "Water and Sewer Administration and Rates"; Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility Advisory Committee, "Implementation Policies Draft"