

# Council Study Session

June 6, 2022

<b>Agenda Item</b>	Housing and Human Services Commission Severe Climate Event Policy Recommendation	
<b>From</b>	Linda Reid	Housing Program Specialist
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:reidl@ashland.or.us">reidl@ashland.or.us</a> 541-552-2043	
<b>Item Type</b>	Requested by Council <input type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Direction <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## **SUMMARY**

At a [regular meeting](#) held on August 7, 2021 the City Council approved a motion to request that the Housing and Human Services Commission develop a proposal for addressing the need for shelter options during extreme weather events. The Council motion is as follows:

*Council requests the Housing and Human Services Commission work with local partners, as well as the staff and council liaisons to the commission, to identify the options available to comprehensively address the extreme weather needs of Ashland residents, including extreme cold, extreme heat, and dangerous levels of wildfire smoke. The Council further requests that the Housing and Human Services Commission develop a proposal for Council consideration regarding how the Ashland Community can best address these needs and the specific role the City will have in that process.*

## **POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED**

### [2020-2024 Consolidated Plan for Use of CDBG funds](#)

#### Tier 1: Higher Priority

- Emergency Preparedness
- Address Climate Change

#### Tier 2: Moderate Priority

- Economic Development
- Housing Needs
- Homeless Services
- All-Age Friendly Community

## **PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION**

Not Applicable

## **BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The City has had two resolutions that address how the City will respond to incidents of inclement winter weather. The current policy Resolution 2013-04 which replaced 2007-11, only set parameters for cold weather conditions under which the City would declare a weather emergency and commit City resources in the form of a City owned building. However, for many years the City had dedicated a small amount of funding to support staff time at partnering non-profit agencies to provide volunteer coordination, communication, and trainings in support of City initiated emergency shelters. The volunteer coordinator was also tasked with finding alternate locations if a City

owned building was not available, and with communicating with other City staff who supported their efforts. This staff included Fire Department staff (CERT Coordinator) and Parks Department staff regarding the use of City owned buildings.

### **Stakeholder Outreach**

The Commission formed a Severe Climate Event Policy Recommendation Workgroup which met several times throughout the process of developing recommendations. The Workgroup created and implemented a plan to solicit stakeholder input to fulfill the Council’s outreach request and to gain input from those interfacing or serving impacted populations, or those who have had a role in the emergency shelter process in prior years, and those who have lived experience.

The workgroup also completed an audit of policies and best practice recommendations for severe and inclement weather shelters and parameters from other communities throughout Oregon and the nation. As well as information from prior programs implement by the City of Ashland in partnership with area non-profits. The workgroup also reviewed information on the health impacts of extreme climate events from a variety of resources, including but not limited to, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Federal department of Health and Human Services, and non-profit organizations who advocate for special populations.

The Workgroup used these policy documents from other communities as a template to provide a framework for the discussion and as a way to clarify and organize the key elements that a comprehensive and inclusive policy should address. These elements were utilized as discussion topic prompts for both the stakeholder listening sessions as well as for the discussion among the full commission.

The feedback from the stakeholder listening sessions, including a debrief meeting after enacting a severe climate shelter event, as well as model language and potential structures gleaned from the resource audit were combined and provided back to the larger commission as a starting point for discussion. The key elements of a comprehensive policy are outlined below, as well as the recommendation that resulted from the discussion of the full commission.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- 1. The policy will set parameters for extreme temperatures both hot and cold and during extreme weather events, and for instances of bad air quality.*

The commissioners discuss a number of different temperature thresholds. The commissioners also discussed feedback form stakeholders, and their own feelings about the difficulties of balancing what most felt to be morally and ethically right with the realities of resources and what could be reasonably accomplished. The Commissioners agreed that in an ideal world the thresholds be more reflective of public health needs, however, they also agreed that the City should not adopt guidelines where the triggers for emergency shelter outpace the City and community’s ability to enact shelters. The City’s guidelines should have flexibility, which would set the thresholds as a baseline but still allow for the calling of shelters as needed. Such as in instances when the National Weather Service issues weather warnings that may necessitate calling for a shelter outside of any set temperature thresholds.

- 2. The policy will identify a coordinator for identification and coordination of shelter locations.*

Feedback regarding shelter locations included a recognition that daytime cooling and smoke shelters could be accommodated in most publically owned buildings including some located on the SOU campus (though it has also been pointed out that some homeless individuals have been trespassed from the SOU

campus). These buildings would potentially be in use and open to the public during the daytime shelter operational hours, and as such would be available to shelter members of the public and may not need any volunteer oversight to operate them as daytime shelters. Overnight shelters however, generally operate outside of normal business hours and may have different safety code requirements to accommodate an overnight use, therefore a coordinator is needed for the night time shelter coordination. There was a consensus among Commissioners and stakeholders that city buildings should be made available for sheltering purposes, even if they have previously been reserved for use as rentals or for recreational purposes. City owned buildings specifically discussed for shelter uses included Pioneer Hall (it has been discussed that Pioneer Hall is preferred, however, there are needed repairs to this building to accommodate an overnight use), the Community Center and the Grove. It was also suggested to approach the school district about utilizing a space that is owned or managed by that entity as those buildings are often well suited to sheltering purposes. Lastly, it was suggested that the City look at making available or developing a commercial kitchen space for use during emergency events as well as for the use of non-profit organizations providing meals for low income populations. The Pioneer Hall kitchen already has Health Department approval to operate as a commercial kitchen for the purposes of community meal preparation, but requires a periodic fee to be paid to maintain that certification.

- 3. The policy should outline a plan for calling and staffing an emergency shelter as well as plan for implementation of the shelter. A severe climate shelter team should be identified and included in the plan. It is recommended that shelter coordination should be City's primary role, and that the City should set aside resources to fund a shelter coordinator either as part of a City staff person's role or through a contract with an outside agency, which is how the City has supported this role in the past.*

It is recommended that shelter coordination should be City's primary role. The City should identify a Decision Making Activator Team (similar to the process that the City of Medford has identified) with the City Manager acting as the lead. The team would resemble a phone tree of sorts, with the City Manager as the leader at the top of the tree in making the determination to call a shelter, a designated staff person would be identified and tasked with issuing a notification for both the need for volunteers as well as to post public information regarding the availability of shelter spaces. The shelter implementation plan could potentially issue a call to the existing CERT volunteer lists (or to specific CERT volunteers who have attended trainings specific to sheltering events) and would also issue a NIXLE alert. Another staff role would be to coordinate communications between members of the Decision Making Activator Team, relevant City staff involved in specific aspects of shelter organization (such as law enforcement, parks department staff, and administration) and any community members or non-profit entities serving in a paid/contracted volunteer coordination role.

- 4. The plan should coordinate a group of people inside and outside of the City to work together to implement an Extreme Climate Event shelter.*

Community stakeholders should work together to identify and secure resources to implement Severe Climate Event shelters. This includes ongoing regular cooperation, communication, and collaboration to coordinate volunteer lists and other resources to support volunteers (like offering shelter specific trainings) locally and regionally. There was agreement for the desire to, "center the voices with lived experience". Focused on those who are needing respite during emergent events, such as seniors, low-income/fixed income households, people's with disabilities, medically fragile individuals, and other

vulnerable populations. It has also been suggested that the City create a central online volunteer list which can be accessed by both City Staff members of the Decision Making Activator team and community partners involved in shelter organization.

It is recognized that while the City has seen a dramatically increased capacity to house homeless populations in the new OHRA Center, the UU Pallet Shelter Project, and the soon Rogue Retreat Pallet Shelter Community, neither of these shelters addresses emergent and short term sheltering needs. So while there may be a reduced number of homeless households seeking overnight shelter during extreme climate events, there still will exist some measure of short term need among that population for temporary overnight respite, and there will continue to be a need for short term emergent daytime smoke and cooling shelters, some of which may be able to be assisted by these organizations at their respective locations. However, locations and volunteers will still need to be mobilized during these short term emergent climate events.

5. *Each shelter should have a scheduled debrief under an action/reflection model.*

This is part of the ongoing local and regional coordination that should result in improved process and best practices.

6. *City's role with regard to resource needs.*

A review of other City's policies has shown that there are a minority of City's that provide direct funding to support Severe Climate Event/Emergency Sheltering activities. The feedback received through the stakeholder outreach events revealed that many stakeholders feel that the City's role should be to provide more resources, including funding to support short term shelters. Stakeholders felt that the City relies too heavily on churches for providing locations, volunteers, and resources. Within the community, the volunteer pool is aging and is less able to provide the same level of service as in years past and many would like to see the City provide more resources to support short term shelters. These resources include:

- Locations for hosting shelters-which could impact City revenues through reduced classes/rental income.
- Direct funding to support volunteer training, coordination and support (though not necessarily through providing a city a staff person to do these activities, but could be part of an existing staff's responsibilities).
- Direct funding to support the resource needs of the shelter.
- Materials (air purifiers, etc.)
- In-Kind donations

### **Recommendations Overview:**

#### H&HSC Recommendations for new Thresholds for calling a shelter:

- The threshold for calling a cold weather shelter should be changed to 32 degrees or below (considering such factors as: wind chill, precipitation, number of days' duration) or in instances where the National Weather Service issues a Weather Warning.
- The threshold for calling an extreme heat shelter should be 95-100 degrees or above depending upon other factors such as humidity, UV index, and overnight lows or in instances where the National Weather Service issues an Extreme Heat warning.

- The threshold for calling a smoke related shelter should be an air quality index of 150 and above or designation of “unhealthy for everyone”) or above.

City’s Role in Instances of Emergency Shelter:

- Shelter Activation and Coordination using a phone tree model
- Establish a Decision Making Activator team similar to that established by the City of Medford
- Identify staff to fulfill specific duties: City Manager-Shelter activator; TBD-Communication Coordinator between paid shelter coordinator and city staff involved/concerned with sheltering activities, City Council and Administration; TBD-Public Information Officer/Nixle alerts/CERT activation.
- Provide City Buildings when needed, even if prior uses/reservations have to be cancelled.
- Provide ongoing funding for contract volunteer/shelter coordination services from an area non-profit service provider or in-house through existing staff.
- Provide a platform for communications between Decision Making Activator Team and shelter coordinators through an online platform that allows real time communication and updates accessible by those inside and outside the City (create a OneDrive account)
- Facilitate a regular ongoing emergency shelter group meeting to debrief after shelter events and for planning and coordination for future shelter events and needs, which could include volunteer trainings, coordination with potential providers of shelter locations and volunteers, and to communicate regionally.
- Provide materials and resources as needed (air purifiers/PPE) and in house targeted training (through CERT).

**FISCAL IMPACTS**

The fiscal impacts range based on the City’s level of involvement, the provision of locations for hosting shelters, and the adoption of thresholds which have the potential to increase the number of shelters days called each year,

**STAFF AND COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

Staff would like direction and a clear process in how the City addresses the need for emergency sheltering during severe climate events. The Housing and Human Services Commission is recommending all of the points above to be included in a new Resolution that supersedes all prior inclement weather policies and sets forth new and comprehensive thresholds for calling for the opening of a shelter in the instances of severe climate events. The resolution will also outline a process for enacting a shelter and will define the City’s role in that process.

**ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS**

Direct Staff to draft a Resolution that supersedes all prior inclement weather policies and sets forth new and comprehensive thresholds for calling a shelter in the instances of severe climate events. The resolution will also outline a process for enacting a shelter and will define the City’s role in that process.

**REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS**

Resolution 2013-04  
References

**RESOLUTION NO. 2013-04**

**A RESOLUTION SETTING FORTH POLICIES AND CONDITIONS  
UNDER WHICH ASHLAND WILL PROVIDE EXTREME WEATHER  
RELATED EMERGENCY SHELTER HOUSING AND REPEALING  
RESOLUTION NO. 2007-11**

**RECITALS:**

- A. Ashland is located in an area that has four distinct seasons, and the winter season can have weather extremes that can be hazardous to persons without adequate shelter.
- B. The City of Ashland desires to set forth the conditions under which it will provide emergency shelter housing and the policies related to those staffing or utilizing such emergency shelter.

**THE CITY OF ASHLAND RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

SECTION 1. Provision of Emergency Shelter.

Ashland will provide emergency shelter under the terms and conditions set forth herein during times of extreme weather conditions. For purposes herein, weather conditions shall be considered extreme when outside temperatures are 20° F or below or a combination of weather conditions, in the discretion of the City Administrator, make conditions hazardous to human life without adequate shelter.

SECTION 2. Terms and Conditions.

- 1) In the event of the need for an emergency shelter during extreme weather, an available city-owned building such as the Grove or Pioneer Hall may be used. Previously booked groups in those locations may be subject to cancellation.
- 2) The shelter will be staffed by volunteers from nonprofit organizations or other organizations in the business of providing for the needs of persons. The city's insurance company requires organizations providing volunteers to provide a letter to the City of Ashland stating that all shelter volunteers have received appropriate training to staff a shelter and have passed criminal background checks.
- 3) Shelter(s) will open at 8:00 p.m. Doors will be locked at 9:00 p.m. Guests may leave the shelter but not re-enter after 9:00 p.m. Guests arriving at the shelter after 9:00 p.m. will not be admitted unless brought to the shelter by a police officer. Guests must vacate the shelter no later than 8:00 a.m. the following morning.
- 4) Shelters must have separate restrooms for men and women and separate sleeping spaces for single men, for single women and for families. Children must not be left alone in the shelter, and signage must be conspicuously displayed to remind guests and volunteers of this requirement.

5) The shelter must contain an emergency box with a first aid kit. Shelter volunteers should bring their own cell phones in case of emergency.

### SECTION 3. Emergency Shelter Activation.

Provisions for emergency shelter will be activated as follows:

- 1) When the City Administrator or designee determines that weather conditions are or are likely to become “extreme,” he/she will contact the City’s CERT Coordinator.
- 2) The CERT Coordinator will contact the Parks and Recreation to determine which facility or facilities will be used as an emergency shelter.
- 3) The CERT Coordinator will contact designated representatives from volunteer organizations to arrange for staff volunteers at the shelter.
- 4) Volunteers and guests are responsible for following the same cleaning requirements as other groups.

### SECTION 4. Emergency Shelter Policies.

Operation of the emergency shelters shall, to the greatest extent feasible, comply with the following policy guidelines:

- 1) Shelter services must be provided with dignity, care, and concern for the individuals involved.
- 2) The buildings used as shelter must be maintained in a safe and sanitary condition at all times and must comply with City, County and State Building, Fire and Health Codes, unless exemptions have been obtained from the appropriate agencies..
- 3) In all Shelters, there should be adequate separation of families and singles, and adequate separation of single women.
- 4) No drugs, alcohol, or weapons will be allowed in shelter property at any time.
- 5) No disorderly conduct will be tolerated.
- 6) No threatening or abusive language will be tolerated.
- 7) No excessive noise will be tolerated, e.g. loud radios etc.
- 8) Smoking will be restricted to the outdoors in designated areas.
- 9) Guests should maintain their own areas in an orderly condition and may be assigned other responsibilities or tasks at the shelter.

SECTION 5. Dogs

Dogs may be permitted in an emergency shelter under the following circumstances:

- 1) Shelter volunteers must designate a specific area in the shelter for dogs. The floor of such area must be covered with thick plastic.
- 2) Dogs must remain in crates while in the shelter. Crates will not be provided, stored, repaired or cleaned by the City of Ashland and must be removed from the shelter when it is vacated.
- 3) If taken outside for biological needs, dogs must be leashed.
- 4) Shelter volunteers are to devise and follow procedures to keep dogs away from each other and other guests as they are being housed for the night and as they exit in the morning.
- 5) Shelter volunteers must be responsible for cleaning and sanitizing any areas soiled by a dog or dogs. Such cleaning is to be done to the satisfaction of City facilities maintenance staff.
- 6) Dogs that become threatening to others or are otherwise unmanageable will be required to leave the shelter.
- 7) Shelter volunteers must notify Jackson County Animal Control in the event a dog bite breaks the skin of an emergency shelter guest or volunteer.

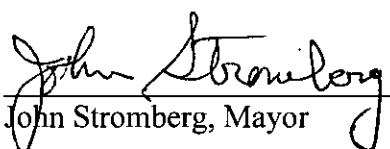
SECTION 6. Resolution No. 2007-11 is hereby repealed.

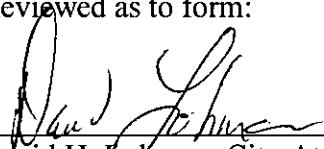
SECTION 7. This resolution takes effect upon signing by the Mayor.

This resolution was duly PASSED and ADOPTED this 5 day of March, 2013, and takes effect upon signing by the Mayor.

  
Barbara Christensen, City Recorder

SIGNED and APPROVED this 5 day of March 2013 ~~2012~~ BC

  
John Stromberg, Mayor

Reviewed as to form:  
  
David H. Lohman, City Attorney



## References—

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Personal communications:

Kenny LaPointe.. Executive Director Mid-Columbia Community Action Council, Hood River, OR. October 2021 Personal communication with Echo Fields

Robert Marshall. Program Manager, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, Salem, OR. October 2021. Personal communication with Echo Fields

