

King County Council Comment 10/13/14  
The Rev. Bill Kirlin-Hackett  
Director, Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness

When you passed ordinance 15170, temporary use permitting for homeless encampments, we all hoped the Ten Year Plan, which began less than two months later, would end the need for interim survival mechanisms such as tent cities. Today the need has substantially increased. Most places the current 3 organized encampments stay are within King County cities, many of which have written their own ordinances. You know as I do that the more similar these ordinances are, the better. But as expected, local jurisdictions do what today I encourage you to avoid; that is, micromanage with legislation. One thing we have learned since the year 2000 is that tent cities are safe and responsible. Now we see even the Committee to End Homelessness concurring that in our present crisis all remedies are necessary that can provide pathways to stability. For these and other reasons, as the County prepares to extend its expiring Encampment ordinance, it must step forward as a progressive guide for its cities. Seattle has stepped forward by advancing the hosting available through faith communities. It has eliminated time frames, allows multiple encampments simultaneously, and advances how families can stay together. I don't expect the County to go as far forward as Seattle has, and in large part because your renewal is not limited to hosting only on faith-owned property. You are ahead of Seattle by continuing the ability to stay on any site. I do encourage amendment of what I have seen as the submitted renewal. I have suggestions that include but are not limited to:

- Section 2.B.4, as to the size of emergency numbers posted
- The frequency of siting in Section 3.C.
- The distance from public transportation in Section 3.E.
- The rule for responding to children in Section 3.J.
- Duplicate line items that include having a Code of Conduct
- And more

Make no mistake. We are in a Crisis. Our One Night Count numbers went up double digits in King and Snohomish Counties. Efforts for distinct populations such as families, Vets, youth, and so on, have unique plans at work that are as yet not overcoming the increases in the growing number of homeless. The common impediment is the lack of affordable permanent and short term housing, and the insufficient supply of places to have a roof over every bed tonight. I realize that other responsibilities facing you like transportation beg for your time. But I remind you that these responsibilities you have intersect and overlap. Where people live affects traffic. But that's another discussion. Today I ask you become the model – as this ordinance was in 2004 when it was written – for how jurisdictions outside Seattle in King County will amend and update their own ordinances. You will become the measurable standard again, and frankly, you ought to be. I am available to meet with staff to amend what is before you so that it fosters what we have learned over these ten years that demands an improved ordinance.