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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2019

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City hosts faith-based organizations, nonprofits to discuss severe weather sheltering

Nearly 70 members of the local faith-based and nonprofit community packed Council Chambers at City Hall on Wednesday to discuss solutions for severe weather sheltering for the homeless in Federal Way.

The gathering was organized by Mayor Jim Ferrell with the goal of gauging interest from those in attendance about what kind of services, staff, supplies and/or facilities each might be able to offer in the case of a severe weather incident in Federal Way.

“This is about leadership and bringing people together in times of need,” Ferrell said. “Faith-based groups and nonprofits in our community have shown time and time again their generosity and willingness to step up and lend a hand, and Wednesday’s gathering was a perfect example of that desire.”

The City is taking the preliminary steps toward becoming an informational and networking hub for both providers and community members seeking a place to spend the night when severe weather strikes in the region.

“Our aim is to play the role of a coordinator as we build a framework for when we have an incident similar to February’s historic snow event,” Ferrell said. “That way, we can respond cohesively for whatever Mother Nature throws at us.”

The City is aiming to provide a sheltering plan for approximately 12 to 15 nights per year. Ferrell has already submitted an amendment to the city budget in the amount of \$15,000 to provide funds to pay for staffing.

The City’s Human Services Department is heading up the project, and in the coming weeks will be meeting individually with community members who expressed a desire to participate in one way or another to determine the next steps.

There will be a plan in place for severe weather sheltering by August, Ferrell said.

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