



KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH, CITY OF KETCHIKAN, AND CITY OF SAXMAN

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE: COVID-19 | SUMMARY OF HOMELESS SERVICES

Date: April 3, 2020
From: Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
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For Immediate Release

This brief provides supplemental information on the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)'s actions to respond to the need for homeless services during the State of Emergency in the Borough.

Facility Use Agreement

The EOC, along with the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and City of Ketchikan came to the decision to use the Gateway Recreation Center for temporary emergency housing for our homeless population. The facility will take over 24-hour housing for the homeless community during the state of emergency in the Borough. This will replace the services currently being provided by the Homeless Services Day Shelter and Overnight Warming Center which are currently being housed at the Methodist Church.

A Facility Use Agreement between the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and City of Ketchikan, was executed on April 1, 2020. The agreement includes an Emergency Shelter Facility Use Plan and Facility Floor Plan. The term of the agreement will be through May 15, 2020, or until the end of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough's disaster emergency declaration, whichever occurs later.

Preparations have been ongoing for setting up the Recreation Center for the homeless services. Supplies, including floor coverings and cots, have been brought in for the operation. Staff from the City and Borough, as well as First City Homeless Services staff, are working together to set up the facility. It is anticipated that the facility would be ready for service to start Monday, April 6, 2020.

Facility Selection Process

Many facilities were looked at prior to making the determination of the Recreation Center. The following facilities were given a thorough review by the EOC:

- Methodist Church (Expansion of current facility)
- National Guard Armory

- Former Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility (KRYF) building
- Ted Ferry Civic Center
- Former City Fire Station
- Schoenbar Middle School

Each of the facilities listed above was either not suitable for a homeless shelter, or was intended for another use. With the current pandemic, it became imperative that homeless shelter services be provided on a 24-hour basis.

Methodist Church – With the need to increase services to 24-hours a day, the facility could not offer the 24-hour service while operating as a church.

Armory – The State of Alaska has an intended use for the facility if and when the National Guard is called up and activated in Ketchikan. The armory is not centrally located in an area that is frequented by our homeless population, and would therefore be inconvenient for this purpose.

KRYF building – This facility has been designated for the future site of the WISH shelter and a contract for construction is underway. This facility has many small rooms but lacks a large open room. The layout of the facility is not conducive for homeless services. It is not centrally located in an area that is frequented by our homeless population, and would therefore be inconvenient for this purpose.

Civic Center – This facility has the open rooms and location that would be conducive for homeless services, but lacks showers which are required for an overnight shelter.

Former Fire Station – This facility is centrally located, but the layout is not conducive for homeless services. The station is multi-level which would be a challenge for the operation of the shelter. The shower facilities are limited, and the rooms are smaller which would make social distancing challenging.

Schoenbar Middle School – This facility is centrally located and has large rooms, showers, and a kitchen. This was initially the first choice as a homeless shelter due to these criteria. However, the kitchen is being used for meal preparation for the breakfast and lunch program for the School District throughout the state of emergency. The uses would be incompatible.

Gateway Recreation Center – The Rec Center meets all of the criteria for use as a homeless shelter. It is centrally located and has convenient access. It has large, open rooms compatible for social distancing. It has multiple showers. It has a kitchen. The layout is convenient for staffing and security purposes. It has separate rooms that could potentially be used as quarantine or isolation rooms if needed.

Staffing for Homeless Services at the Recreation Center

The City of Ketchikan will be paying the wages of the additional temporary shelter staff. It is anticipated that the expenses associated with the emergency services will be reimbursed through the federal disaster funding.

With the shift of going to a 24-hour operation, homeless shelter staffing will need to be increased. In addition, moving to the larger facility requires additional staffing. It is anticipated that there will be approximately 12 total shelter staff members providing service on a rotating basis. Two to four staff members would serve at a time.

In addition, building security services will be provided by 49th State Security.

Additional current information on COVID-19 is available through the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) at www.coronavirus.alaska.gov. EOC information and the response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Ketchikan is updated daily on the COVID-19 Response page at <https://www.kgbak.us/913/COVID-19-Response>.

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