
MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR JENSEN AND BOROUGH ASSEMBLY
FROM: KARL HAGERMAN, EOC INCIDENT COMMANDER
SUBJECT: EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY SHELTERING AGREEMENT
DATE: 9/29/2020
CC: STEPHEN GIESBRECHT, BOROUGH MANAGER

On April 13, 2020, the State of Alaska issued Health Mandate #14 in order to recognize the importance of, and facilitate the establishment of, non-congregate sheltering across the State. The goals were to establish sheltering situations for populations that were highly critical and may need to be isolated from others in order to continue to perform their jobs as first responders or health care workers or prevent spread of the virus; and also for homeless persons that required isolation housing if they were either waiting for testing results or were infected with the coronavirus.

On April 28, 2020, the Assembly approved Emergency Health Directive #7 which established a plan and program to meet State Mandate #14. The plan provided for reservation of rooms at the Narrows Inn for homeless persons and also would facilitate housing of first responders and health care workers at the Scandia House or Tides Inn as needed.

There have been three persons sheltered as a result of the program. All were homeless and all were waiting for test results after receiving a PCR nose swab prescribed due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19. All sheltered persons received negative results and were checked out of the shelter upon receipt of their result. The shortest stay was two nights and the longest was 5 days.

Throughout the summer, the EOC has extended the sheltering agreement with the Narrows Inn as prescribed by the document. Initially, the EOC reserved 7 rooms. At the end of the initial 3-month term, the EOC reduced the number of rooms being reserved to 4. The program has had no sheltered persons since May. The last of the sheltering agreement extensions expired on September 30th.

At this time, with Petersburg experiencing a prolonged period of no new cases of COVID-19 the Emergency Sheltering Agreement with the Narrows Inn may seem unnecessary. However, the fact that Petersburg has been very successful in keeping the virus at bay does not eliminate the potential for our community to have an outbreak. Many communities in SE Alaska have had recent outbreaks, with Juneau continuing to see daily case counts go up. Statewide, case counts continue to rise daily with recent days seeing new cases of 100 or more. The pandemic is not over.

The Narrows Inn is the only facility in Petersburg that agreed to shelter homeless persons who were impacted by the virus and remains the only facility that would be able to provide isolated shelter in order to avoid an infected homeless person moving about the community and spreading the virus to their friends and others.

I propose and recommend that the Assembly approve the extension of a sheltering agreement with the Narrows Inn, on a month to month basis, until the end of December 2020 or if State Mandate 14 is rescinded, and with a reduction of reserved rooms from four (4) to two (2) rooms. The cost is being paid for by FEMA (75%) and the State (25%) at the rate per month per room is \$800. I believe that this is the best option for isolating any affected homeless persons who are impacted by the virus which also serves to protect the community at large, if an outbreak within our homeless population were to occur.

Thank you for your consideration.