

Dear Mayor Leavitt,

The Board of County Councilors has learned that the City of Vancouver has been hosting meetings to discuss opening an emergency homeless shelter using the 1 percent affordable housing property tax city voters approved in November.

We understand the City Council held a workshop on the matter Feb. 13. During the workshop, we understand, and *The Columbian* reported, that city staff said Vancouver Housing Authority is considering buying a building in the unincorporated Hazel Dell area to convert to a homeless shelter. City staff is apparently in the process of determining whether the 1 percent affordable housing property tax can be used to pay for renovations needed to convert the building to a shelter.

The county is keenly aware of the increase in homelessness in our community, and we understand the need for more services, especially emergency shelter beds. However, the county council cannot support the city placing a homeless shelter in the unincorporated area. If the city wants to open a new homeless shelter, it only makes sense to open it within the city's limits. After all, city residents are footing the bill and most homeless people are in the city limits.

Clark County is the largest financing source for homeless services in our community. The county spends nearly \$4.5 million annually for programs that provide emergency shelter, prevention, rapid re-housing, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. This funding includes federal, state and local dollars, including contributions from the county's General Fund.

More specifically, the largest funding source is document recording fees. The county retains 60 percent of these fees and earmarks them for homeless programs. The data shows that more than 73 percent of people dealing with homelessness are in the Vancouver urban area, which is why more of these revenues are invested within Vancouver's city limits.

Unfortunately, a temporary increase in document recording fees is set to end in July 2019. If the fee increase sunsets, funding for homeless programs will be reduced by about 62 percent. This reduction likely would result in the elimination of many homeless programs.

If Vancouver would like Clark County to continue funding current programs and any future program requests, we believe it is important that the city appeal to the 2017 Legislature to extend or eliminate the sunset date and increase the document recording surcharge.

We would welcome a discussion with you and your council on funding for homelessness programs in general and siting a new homeless shelter. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments. We look forward to working with you for the betterment of all community members.

Thank you.