PROPOSED COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE HOMELESS COALITION AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Back in 2019 BC (Before Covid-19) Tom Pierson, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce (CC), attended a meeting of the Homeless Coalition (HC) and voiced support for a general collaboration between our two parties around issues of housing and employment. Subsequently, he appointed Architect Ben Ferguson chair of a new Affordable Housing committee within the CC.

Subsequently, Gerrit Nyland and Al Ratcliffe met with Ben to explore how a collaboration might work. Covid-19 interrupted that exploration, and we have only recently resumed our conversation. We met virtually on April 17 and enjoyed a candid and open discussion. We agreed on a general framework of collaboration around three issues:

1. Lack of attainable housing is an issue not just for those people in the lowest income brackets, but also for people of middle and even higher incomes. There just is not enough housing; and the ultimate solution is to develop enough safe and healthy housing options for everybody in Tacoma.
2. Need for expansion of employment training in both traditional and emerging skill sets. Access to employment is a fundamental gateway to housing access for those able to work.
3. Equitable access to housing and work opportunities is foundational to solving these issues and achieving a just society.

But what about the fact that our interests may be compatible regarding some strategies and may conflict regarding others? We agreed that:

1. The two parties can support each other actively and publicly when our strategies are mutually acceptable.
2. We can collaborate passively, by choosing not to oppose the other, when one party does not fully agree with the other but also does not strongly oppose the strategy.
3. We can publicly oppose each other when we really do not agree on the strategy.
4. Finally, we can maintain a continuing, respectful and healthy collaboration knowing that our interests inevitable will conflict on some strategies, but to varying degrees. Open communication will be expected and honored by both parties.