



July 2, 2023

The 33rd District Democrats Executive Board condemns the Burien City Council's June 15th, 2023 vote to remove volunteer Charles Schaefer as chair of the Burien Planning Commission. Mr. Schaefer was removed by the Council at a special meeting dedicated not to addressing the homelessness crisis but only to punishing Mr. Schaefer and City Councilmember Cydney Moore. We do not condone the bullying of volunteer public servants by elected officials. Removing public servants who engage in the best interests of their community, simply out of disagreement, is an abuse of power and breaks public trust. Then-Chair Charles Shaefer acted in support of people experiencing homelessness when the Burien City Council chose not to act.

Rather than take constructive action towards housing these people by working with the County, and rather than take responsibility for their own inaction, the City Council has instead chosen to take punitive action by scapegoating Mr. Schaefer, a dedicated volunteer public servant.

King County offered \$1 million to Burien along with 35 shelters, valued at another \$350,000, with no strings attached to the provisions aside from them being used to shelter the unhoused. This was provided in a June 7th letter, and acceptance of these resources was proposed by Councilmember Garcia in a special meeting on May 30th. The proposal was voted down by the Burien City Council 4-3, and has not been revisited. The following day, unhoused individuals were told to leave the empty lot and have since moved to multiple locations around the city, leading to multiple subsequent sweeps.

After the City Council supported the removal of unhoused individuals from the area adjacent to City Hall, some of these individuals moved to a nearby empty lot on 152nd St. This lot quickly filled up to a quantity larger than what was previously used adjacent to City Hall. The City Council then sought to remove these individuals by way of executing a lease with a local non-profit, so that the lot could then be considered private property in a transparent attempt to avoid claims of illegality. King County issued a letter on May 19th stating their belief that this action still may nevertheless be unconstitutional, and refused to allow King County Sheriffs, whom Burien contracts with for law enforcement services, to assist in the action.

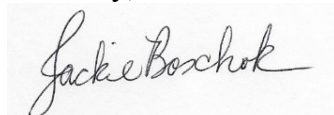
Therefore, the 33rd District Democrats Executive Board further condemns the Burien City Council for its persistent refusal, overriding the will of Burien voters, to take action to address the city's homelessness crisis despite clear options being available.

Subsequent to the removal of Charles Shaefer as Chair of the Planning Commission, nearly the entire Planning Commission resigned, along with members from other volunteer commissions, totaling 11 resignations. In effect, the Burien City Council's actions have decimated the body of passionate and dedicated volunteers on whom the City of Burien relies, lost trust with public servants in the City, and perpetuated harm to vulnerable members of Burien's unhoused community.

We call upon the City Council, in particular Mayor Sofia Aragon, Deputy Mayor Kevin Schilling, and Councilmembers Jimmy Matta and Stephanie Mora, to apologize to Mr. Schaefer and Ms. Moore, to offer reinstatement to Mr. Schaefer, to cease further punitive action against volunteer public officials, and to commit to supporting Burien's corpus of public sector volunteers in an effort to bring back the resigned commissioners.

We also call upon the City Council to take action on Burien's homelessness crisis by listening to the voters of Burien, by ceasing traumatic and ineffective sweeps, and by promptly taking advantage of King County's offer of resources to provide housing to Burien's citizens experiencing homelessness.

Sincerely,



Jackie Boschok
33rd LD Democrats Chair



Sam Mendez
33rd LD Democrats Vice-Chair

On behalf of the 33rd LD Executive Board