

HOLD FOR AUGUST 15 RELEASE

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Contact: Shawn Collins

(541) 757-7717

PLAN SOLIDIFIED FOR 2017-18 MEN'S COLD WEATHER SHELTER

After nearly eight months of exploring multiple options, a location and a plan for operating the men's cold weather shelter for the 2017-18 season have been finalized.

The 40-bed shelter will operate at the former Hanson Tire Factory, 211 S.E. Chapman Place, according to Shawn Collins, program manager for the Housing Opportunities Action Council (HOAC) led jointly by Benton County and the City of Corvallis. A sub-committee of that group has been working since January to finalize plans for the shelter after it was agreed that the shelter would no longer operate at its previous downtown location.

The new site is owned by Devco Engineering, a local company that plans to renovate the building and re-locate some of its employees into the space. Company leaders agreed to make the building available, rent-free, for the coming shelter season only.

"We are very grateful to Devco for generously making this space available," said Mayor Biff Traber, who co-chairs the HOAC and is a member of the sub-committee working on the cold weather shelter plan. "They stepped in at a critical time in our process, and the remaining pieces quickly came together on our plan for this winter."

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis has agreed to serve as the non-profit operating entity for the shelter, providing the liability insurance and employing the shelter's manager, overnight supervisory staff and cleaning staff, said the Rev. Jill McAllister, the Fellowship's senior minister. McAllister is also a member of the HOAC sub-committee.

McAllister said a steering committee will be formed to oversee the shelter project, with representation coming from the Fellowship's board, other participating congregations, current HOAC members and neighbors of the new shelter site.

The closest neighbor is the First Alternative Co-op's South Corvallis store, located across the street. Traber and other members of the sub-committee met with the Co-op's staff and board prior to finalizing the plans for the shelter.

"They provided some very helpful feedback and suggestions, and were supportive of this effort," Traber said. "We also hope they will agree to be part of our steering committee."

McAllister said the steering committee will also include those with experience in shelter operations.

"For example, the Room at the Inn women's shelter has operated successfully at the First United Methodist Church for a number of years, so their organizers and staff will certainly be a great resource for us," she said.

Plans now turn to preparing the 2,800-square-foot building to function as a shelter and finalizing the operating budget and funding plan, Collins said.

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“We will need to provide bathroom and shower facilities, exit doors, additional lighting and an outdoor canopy,” Collins said. “We are working with our local Habitat for Humanity to coordinate the renovation project and volunteers, and we have already received an offer from a local carpenter’s union whose members would like to volunteer.”

In addition to renovation costs, the estimated operating budget for the five-month shelter season is approximately \$100,000, Collins said. The Corvallis City Council recently allocated \$30,000 to support shelter operations, with an additional \$30,000 available with the caveat that Benton County also assist with funding.

“Now that we have a site and an operating plan, we will begin to approach other potential funders, and I am confident that we will make this work,” Traber said. “It is very gratifying to see how the community is coming together to address this vitally important need.”