

What is WCIA is doing to address the topic of homelessness?

By Patti Crane

One of WCIA's 2019 goals is to "Educate members regarding liability exposures associated with housing and homelessness issues." Member Services promptly went to work creating programs and partnerships in order to satisfy this goal.

To begin we asked Jeff Myers with Law, Lyman, Daniel, Kamerrer & Bogdanovich to create a WCIA Full Board Education session on Risk Managing Homelessness for Delegates, Alternates and those responsible for homelessness issues within their entity. The success of this session led to sharing the message with a sold-out crowd of city attorneys at the WA State Association of Municipal Attorneys' Spring Pre-Conference.

We took advantage of Municipal Research and Services Center's (MRSC) offering of a three-part Affordable Housing and Homelessness webinar series by quickly adding them to our WCIA Reimbursement Program. This series emphasized limitations of enforcement, legal considerations and case studies, as well as what counties and cities can do to address the homelessness crisis.

WA State Department of Commerce Growth Management also offered a *special* short course on local planning focusing on Affordable Housing. Two (Tukwila and Ellensburg) of twelve WCIA members presented this course to their elected officials, boards, commissions and community to full-room audiences.

In May, WCIA added another reimbursement opportunity by partnering with the American Planning Association (APA) to support a seminar on Temporary Encampments. This session was hosted by the City of Bellingham Planning Department and featured multiple community planning and development staff sharing their homelessness experiences and the resulting proactive programs. We followed up with APA to create a repeat venue slated for October 25 in the City of Lacey featuring local city, county and defense attorney resources.

WCIA is also collaborating with the Association of WA Cities (AWC) to develop a forum for elected officials on coordination and communication of resources for addressing homelessness within individual communities. This forum will bring together the departments playing a key role in harnessing the challenges of homelessness (Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks), addressing shared concerns as well as finding the resources to manage the liability homelessness presents. Date to be determined – stay tuned!