Meeting with Spokane Police Chief Hall: Safe and Accessible Public Spaces Ordinance

On October 8, two members of the League of Women Voters (LWV) Affordable Housing and Homelessness Committee met with Spokane Police Chief Hall to discuss the Safe and Accessible Public Spaces ordinance, passed in late October 2025. The ordinance gives Spokane police officers discretion to issue citations or jail individuals who refuse offers of treatment services.

Chief Hall described the approach as "compassionate policing," He explained that research shows individuals sometimes need "a nudge" to accept services. Officers often contact an outreach team to help connect individuals with available resources. However, Chief Hall acknowledged significant gaps in the availability of mental health services, addiction treatment, and housing.

In an ideal system, Chief Hall said, Spokane would have a 24-hour stabilization unit to serve individuals experiencing mental health or addiction-related crises. He referred to this as the "Third Place," describing a setting with greater security where individuals referred for services would be expected to participate to a significant degree.

Chief Hall reported that police officers receive crisis intervention training, including techniques for de-escalating difficult situations. He also acknowledged that Spokane lacks adequate data infrastructure to track these interactions and outcomes, although he expects improvements with the introduction of new technology.

Reported Outcomes Since the Ordinance Passed

Chief Hall provided the following figures for police interactions since the ordinance passed in October 2025:

- **3,000 police interactions**
- **1,800 offers of service**
- **1,800 citations**
- **550 acceptances of services**, including housing, treatment, and navigation assistance

Chief Hall reported that treatment compliance before the ordinance was zero.