

Whatcom County Council Public Works & Health Committee

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
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Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

11 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 12:25 PM
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 10:57 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmler

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Ben Elenbaas

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2024-693](#) Presentation by Whatcom County Health and Community Services Staff on the Healthy Children's Fund Subsidy Program

The following people spoke:

- Sarah Simpson, Health and Community Services
- Casey Osborn, Central Consulting

They stated they are seeking Council feedback on the following options, and read from a presentation (on file).

- Help more families with less subsidy;
- Help fewer families with more subsidy; or
- Help more families with more subsidy, which would expend more of the annual Healthy Children's Fund budget

The speakers answered questions about what direction they are looking for from Council, and what the trade-offs would be of going with one subsidy scenario over another.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated their request for policy direction is whether the Council wants to serve more children at a lower subsidy or fewer children at a higher subsidy, and how they would like to balance these competing needs of really big-ticket items. Closing the rate augmentation gap for childcare providers would be about \$7.5 million, and they have \$10 million a year in the whole fund. Closing the subsidy gap for families would be another \$4.5 million, so they do not have enough money to do all of it. It would be helpful, then, for them to know where the Council would want to prioritize between subsidies and rate augmentation and balance those with the other nine priorities within the

Healthy Children’s Fund, given the limited amount of money.

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed not having a subsidy that would leave a gap of families not being served, that they are trying to ease the burden of costs jumping from a \$260 copayment to the \$1,800 for families who are just over income, while also trying to ease the “cliff” for providers who take on the responsibility of caring for infants and toddlers, taking more time before making a permanent decision by starting lower on the subsidy and then reassessing after a year, the fact that Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is massively underutilized and why that is, whether the State will refine their system to encourage more participants, and how the State is coming to better understand the cost of care and how it affects having a sustainable market.

Scanlon suggested that Councilmembers could reach out to staff over the course of the next two weeks with questions and then they can come back to this at the next meeting for a specific recommendation from Council.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2024-756](#) Presentation by Jaime Bodden, Managing Director of the Washington State Association of Local Health Officials, on local health board composition options
Scanlon stated they will have a presentation today about local Health Board composition options since changes in the State law a few years ago. The Health Board and Public Health Advisory Board discussed this last week in their meeting, and today the Council will hear what other counties have done in order to help inform the process.

Jaime Bodden, Managing Director of the Washington State Association of Local Health Officials (WSALPHO), read from a presentation (on file) about Washington state’s local and State governmental public health system, the different models across the state and how they compare to each other in their requirements and structures, the changes imposed in 2021 by House Bill 1152, how Washington compares nationally in its board compositions, the role of the local board of health, the elements that make them successful, and the statutes in which public health authority lie.

Galloway asked whether the County could change back to its current model if they decided to move to a different one, how they could build support and capacity for the Health Board and what other staffing models look like, and how other counties have addressed overlap and determining which entity does what (as in the pandemic response).

Bodden spoke about other counties in regards to Galloway's questions, that there are elements that certain counties are doing really well but that there is not a gold standard of best practices yet, whether she sees differences between the counties in which the Council/Commissioners serve as the Board of Health compared to the others, using the Revised Code of Washington (RCWs) to guide what powers the Council would have if they changed the model, making decisions about expanding membership of the board based on what they envision for the county in the future, and finding out how to utilize and leverage diverse perspectives to help inform a wide range of programs and services and to help inform government decisions.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2024-696](#) Discussion of proposed ordinance relating to the Seven-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2025-2031

Lucas Clark, Planning and Development Services Department, read from a presentation (on file), and he and the following people answered questions:

- Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office
- Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director
- Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office

They answered questions about the dollar amounts listed for projects in the proposed Seven-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and whether they need to be updated to reflect the most current estimates in order for Council to approve the related Ordinance (**AB2024-697** on for introduction tonight), and how this plan overlaps with what the County is trying to do through the Comprehensive Plan in planning for capital facilities and infrastructure in urban growth areas (UGAs) under County jurisdiction and in areas where they are expecting growth to go.

They discussed with Councilmembers that capital facilities in municipal UGAs are the responsibility of the cities, the process for developing this CIP and that the amounts could be updated if the Council would like that, that the purposes of the CIP are for it to be a long-term planning document and for projects to qualify for Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funding, why the debt service for the Northwest Annex project is listed but not the construction costs and that the project budget will be updated at some point to reflect the full costs, the desire to have the most recent calculations in the most recent CIP, the need for more time to discuss the ordinance, and

potential amendments regarding it being a six-year rather than a seven-year plan and the related Charter citation.

Councilmembers discussed that they would like to talk about this further either later in the afternoon or during the Council meeting tonight.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger