

Whatcom County Council (Special)

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Minutes - Final

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

9:30 AM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN
INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL
360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Announcements

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2022-634](#) Discussion of the County Executive's recommended 2023-2024 Biennium Budget
Kershner moved to amend the budget to include five Sheriff's Deputies for 2023 and five Sheriff's deputies for 2024 (ten total). The motion was seconded by Donovan.

Donovan moved to amend the motion and to have two deputies and Galloway seconded (but there was already a main motion on the floor).

Kershner stated our population has increased seventeen percent since 2010, but the FTEs in the Sheriff's Office have only increased five and a half percent.

Councilmembers discussed the motion with the following people:

- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Bill Elfo, Sheriff
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office

Sidhu asked whether the motion is proposing a total of ten deputies over the two years and Kershner confirmed that it was.

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed how many vacancies the Sheriff's Office has currently, whether the fiscal impact would be smaller by hiring more deputies because there would then be less overtime, how much the County currently spends on overtime hours, and whether five deputies should be added each year or two.

Elfo gave Councilmembers the amount spent on overtime. He stated the mental health deputies are currently paid for out of the General Fund and it

might be an eligible expense for the Behavioral Health fund.

Schroeder answered whether there is a way they could fund one of the mental health deputies from the Behavioral Health Fund.

Sidhu stated they should look beyond the next two years to the next five to seven years. They have started the alternate response team and as that is expanded it may relieve some pressure on the Sheriff's patrol deputies. And the Sheriff is consulting with the SCORE (South Correctional Entity) facility in South King County.

Schroeder spoke about the cost of five deputies in 2023 and five in 2024 and how it would affect the fund balance compared to adding two deputies in each year.

Donovan withdrew his motion so as not to have two main motions on the floor.

Schroeder answered whether the fund balance after adding two deputies would still be above the fifteen percent reserve threshold, whether approving a mental health deputy out of a different fund would be an extra on top of the two deputies if they go that route, and whether the projected ending General Fund balance is allowing for the projected lapse.

Kershner asked whether there could be some work done to make sure they are taking the right amount out of funds from the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy for law enforcement, and whether law enforcement has received the amount they should have based on that levy. She stated she does not want to end up with more money and less services than we need and she would rather come to a level in our budget where we agreed to be (at least fifteen percent reserve) and then put that into positions in law enforcement.

Sidhu stated the Administration is comfortable with two deputies in each year.

Elfo stated we have academy slots for the Sheriff's Office's seven vacancies, and the more deputies we have the more time we could spend on preventing crime which may have an overall impact on reducing jail needs.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Buchanan, Byrd, Elenbaas, Galloway, and Kershner
Nay: 2 - Donovan and Frazey

Schroeder stated if the Council wants to accomplish the fifteen percent minimum reserve on the General Fund, they need to find additional General Fund revenue.

Kershner moved to discontinue all vaccine clinics and accompanying staff and resources to that effect that we are currently budgeting to pay for with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The motion was seconded by Elenbaas.

Kershner stated she asked for the number of people that are still visiting the vaccine clinics that our Health Department is putting on and the number is very low. She can anticipate that it will continue to be low as the Covid crisis continues to wane and anyone that has wanted a vaccine has ample time and resources to get one. We can use those ARPA dollars in a more efficient way.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, stated there is one position associated with vaccines but not just COVID-19 vaccines. Thirty percent of their job is COVID-related so she is not clear how they would like to break that up. She answered whether we were doing vaccine work prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and what vaccines we were administering, and what is meant by secure transfers of vaccine to health care providers.

Councilmembers discussed the motion and Kershner stated the portion of the \$1,137,909 for 2023 and \$676,353 in 2024 for COVID Recovery (ASR 6847) that is for vaccine clinics is money we do not need to spend and she would like to figure out how we can pull that out of the budget and use that in a place where we do need to spend that money.

Lautenbach answered whether that position is fully funded by ARPA dollars right now, and whether other vaccines are offered at the vaccination clinics.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Elenbaas, and Kershner
Nay: 4 - Donovan, Frazey, Galloway, and Buchanan

Donovan moved to add \$18,000 from the Behavioral Health Fund to the Health Department to increase the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Whatcom support services for Spanish speakers in East Whatcom County. The motion was seconded by Galloway.

Schroeder spoke about how the program is funded. There is budget authority already so a specific budget decision does not need to be made, but Council can indicate support for it and the Administration would be able to carry it out moving into 2023.

Donovan amended his motion **and moved** that the Council express support for an additional \$18,000 (for the NAMI [National Alliance on Mental Illness] Whatcom support services for Spanish speakers in East Whatcom County). The motion was seconded by Galloway.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, Galloway, Kershner, Buchanan, and Byrd

Nay: 0

Galloway moved to amend the Planning and Development Department budget to add a .25 FTE to the Conservation Easement program planner in 2023 and for that to round up to a full FTE for 2024. The motion was seconded by Frazey.

Councilmembers, Sidhu, and Schroeder discussed the motion, a cost estimate for the proposal, whether they would be protecting farmland or the ability to farm, what the estimated fund balance would be by 2024 with the added Sheriff's deputies, the source of this budget amendment coming from Conservation Futures Fund or grants, the health of that fund balance right now, and whether the motion was to take the .75 FTE in Conservation Futures and increase it by .25 in 2023 (which would in turn decrease the General Fund by .25 FTE) and then add a new 1.0 FTE position in 2024, all funded by the Conservation Futures Fund.

Galloway restated her motion to add .25 FTE for 2023 and 1 FTE for 2024 using Conservation Futures Funds.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Frazey, Galloway, Buchanan, and Donovan

Nay: 3 - Elenbaas, Kershner, and Byrd

Kershner moved to remove ASR numbers 6446 - Election Van and 6509 - ER & R Fund for the New Purchase of a Van (Auditor's request for a van). The motion was seconded by Byrd.

Sidhu, Schroeder, and Brad Bennett, Administrative Services Department

Finance, answered whether we need another vehicle in our fleet, whether these are Election Reserve Funds and not General Funds, whether it is possible to make sure a van from the County is available during election time, what the Auditor's Office is doing now to pick up ballots, and whether the County has always rented a vehicle in the last three years instead of having a marked County vehicle.

Galloway asked whether they will have more time to discuss other amendments to the budget and if so, if they might table this motion until that time so they can invite the Auditor to come back and answer their questions.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, stated that November 17 is a potential date for having more discussion.

Galloway moved to table the motion to Thursday, November 17 and invite the Auditor to join them for that. The motion was seconded by Frazey.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

The motion to table the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Galloway, Kershner, Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, and Frazey

Nay: 0

Because of time constraints today, Kershner recommended that Councilmembers outline their remaining wishes.

Galloway outlined her intended amendments as follows:

- Add capacity in climate action in the Public Works Department by either adding budget authority for a Climate Action Manager or adding 1 FTE for a Climate Data Analyst.
- Add funds in the Parks Department budget for forest management plans for our three County-owned forests.
- Add funds to Facilities to fund a study and installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at County facilities.

Kershner outlined her intentions as follows:

- Add a Public Service Specialist (the Crisis Communication Manager) to our Department of Emergency Management.
- Get answers about the funding they are contributing to Northwest

Youth Services and the Opportunity Council which are running 22 North.

- Look at what some of the Non-Departmental ASRs from the Executive's Office include such as the Economic Development Tri-Funder Agreement (ASR 6960), and the Emergency Communications - What-Comm (ASR 6964) and why it is being funded from the General Fund and not with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) money.
- Discuss the EMS budget, specifically their fund balance and past-year expenditures, and why we have such a high fund balance, why we do not have the 5th medic unit, and what the EMS Committee plans to do with the extra money they are going to be receiving from the levy. Look at reducing that budget down to a more reasonable expectation and collect less than the levy is currently passing at.

Donovan stated his priority is trying to address the massive hole they just blew into the budget with adding the Sheriff's deputies. Anyone coming with any proposals for new FTEs out of the General Fund should be coming with revenue increases or FTEs to cut.

Sidhu stated their projections for the fund balance of the General Fund include the Council deciding to take the one percent increase.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.

MOTION SUMMARY:

Motion approved to amend the budget to include five Sheriff Deputies for 2023 and five Sheriff deputies for 2024 (ten total).

Motion approved to express Council support for an additional \$18,000 for the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Whatcom support services for Spanish speakers in East Whatcom County.

Motion approved to amend the budget to add a .25 FTE Conservation Easement Program Planner (ASR number 6747) for 2023 and a 1.0 FTE for 2024 using Conservation Futures funds.

Motion approved to table the discussion regarding removing the Auditor's Additional Service Request (ASR) to purchase a van (ASR number 6446 - Election Van and number 6509 - ER & R Fund for the New Purchase of a Van) to November 17 and invite the Auditor to join them for that.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on November 22, 2022.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE