

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
**Executive Office**  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108  
Bellingham, WA 98225



**Satpal Singh Sidhu**  
County Executive

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
From: Tawni Helms, Administrative Coordinator  
Re: Medical Examiner contract amendment  
Date: November 15, 2022

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Enclosed for your review and approval is a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Hunt Forensics, LLC for the provision of Medical Examiner Services.

- **Background and Purpose**

This contract amendment is a result of increased costs and expenditures for the Medical Examiner Office due to significant increases in the number of deaths and autopsies under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction.

In 2022 Whatcom County contracted with new Medical Examiner/Forensic Pathologist for the first time in 30 years. In negotiating the contract, a budget was developed in accordance with the number of cases and autopsies document in the previous year. That included 168 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting.

The first 6 months of 2022 the number of cases increased significantly with 372 deaths reported to the Medical Examiner's Office and 200 of those cases were fully investigated with 122 requiring a form of postmortem examination. With the significant increase in autopsies the Medical Examiner requested additional funds to continue the level of services required under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner Office. This work demand is expected to continue through the term of the agreement and beyond. The associated cost increases necessary to maintain this level of service were approved recently for the 2022 contract year. This amendment addresses the ongoing cost increase for the final three years of the contract.

- **Funding Amount and Source**

Funding in the amount of \$285,820 in 2023 and \$285,820 in 2024 was approved through Ordinance 2022-070. The additional funding for the final year of the contract will be funded through the next biennial budget process. The funding source is the General Fund.