

From: noreply@civicplus.com
To: Online Form Submittal: Board and Commission Application
Subject: Sunday, January 03, 2021 5:48:41 PM
Date:

Board and Commission Application

Step 1

Application for Appointment to Whatcom County Boards and Commissions

Public Statement

THIS IS A PUBLIC DOCUMENT: As a candidate for a public board or commission, the information provided will be available to the County Council, County Executive, and the public. All board and commission members are expected to be fair, impartial, and respectful of the public, County staff, and each other. Failure to abide by these expectations may result in revocation of appointment and removal from the appointive position.

Title	Ms.
First Name	Debbie
Last Name	Ahl
Today's Date	1/3/2021
Street Address	2219 RIMLAND DR
City	BELLINGHAM
Zip	98226
Do you live in & are you registered to vote in Whatcom County?	Yes
Do you have a different mailing address?	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Primary Telephone	3603932599
Secondary Telephone	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Email Address	d.ahl@mtbakerfoundation.org

Step 2

1. Name of Board or Commission Child & Family Well-Being Task Force

Committee

Child & Family Well-Being Task Force Yes

2. Do you meet the residency, employment, and/or affiliation requirements of the position for which you're applying? Yes

3. Which Council district do you live in? District 3

4. Are you a US citizen? Yes

5. Are you registered to vote in Whatcom County? Yes

6. Have you declared candidacy (as defined by RCW 42.17A.055) for a paid elected office in any jurisdiction within the county? No

7. Have you ever been a member of this Board/Commission? No

8. Do you or your spouse have a financial interest in or are you an employee or officer of any business or agency that does business with Whatcom County? No

You may attach a resume or detailed summary of experience, qualifications, & interest in response to the following questions Attached

9. Please describe your occupation (or former occupation if retired), qualifications, professional and/or community activities, and education

Please see attached letter

10. Please describe why you're interested in serving on this board or commission

Please see attached letter

References (please include daytime telephone number):

Please see attached letter

Signature of applicant:

Debbie J Ahl

Place Signed / Submitted

Bellingham, WA

(Section Break)

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January 3, 2021

Whatcom County Council
Via on-line application process

Re: Child & Family Well Being Task Force

Dear Whatcom County Council:

This letter is to supplement my application for appointment to the newly created **Child and Family Well-Being Task Force**. The position I am applying for is **Private Business / Corporations / Philanthropy**.

I am a resident of Whatcom County Council District #3, living in the Geneva neighborhood. I meet the eligibility for the task force, am a U.S. Citizen, registered to vote in Whatcom County, and have not served on this task force as it is being newly formed.

Professional Qualifications, Activities and Education.

I may be uniquely suited to serve in the position of Private Business / Corporations / Philanthropy for the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force based on the following:

- Bachelor's Degree in Communications, Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Management.
- More than 40 years residing, working, and raising children in Whatcom County.
- Ten years working in non-profit hospital administration (the old St. Luke's), including support for the development of the first employer-sponsored childcare (1984), the Center for Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, the Adult Day Health program, an information and resource referral program for senior adults (Eldered) and the creation of a health plan.
- Ten years in private for process business, an entrepreneurial start up called Olympic Health Management Systems, Inc.
- Ten years as the President and CEO of Sterling Life Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Aon Corporation, publicly traded on the NYSE and then Munich Re, publicly traded on the European stock exchange.
- Former employer of 1500 employees, 750 based in Bellingham, as the President and CEO of Sterling. Due to a large claims and customer service division, many of our employees were young, entry level, and starting families (at one time I tracked 19 pregnancies within the building for baby shower gifts).

- I currently serve in a voting capacity on the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee for Whatcom County, which provides me with regular updates on various industry segments in Whatcom County.
- Board experiences includes my current roles as a Governor-appointed Trustee at Bellingham Technical College (nearly 10 years); a Director for the NW Innovation Resource Center (10 years) and until recently, a member of the Board of Directors of Compass Health, a regional provider of behavioral and mental health services. I also serve as a Director appointed by a private equity firm for a hospital system in eastern Washington in the process of exiting bankruptcy.
- As the Founder of Edgewater Advising, I serve two clients. One is a digital healthcare IT company in Dallas, TX which keeps one foot firmly in the national healthcare landscape and private business world (as well as with publicly traded corporations through its clients). The second is Mount Baker Foundation, a relatively new private foundation, where I am entrenched in the philanthropic community in Whatcom County and where I serve as Executive Director.
- Through my work with Mount Baker Foundation, I have served on the Policy, Advocacy & Funding work group for Generations Forward, and with the advocacy group which presented the Children & Families Action plan to the Whatcom County Council. I also support the work of the United Way with its recent Childcare expansion grant from the Department of Commerce. Mount Baker Foundation has been actively engaged with supporting and working to expand childcare and early learning.

Interest in serving on the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force.

- **Personal interest:**
 - My husband, Bill Ziels, and I are the parents of a blended family of six adult children, ages 25 to 39. Our four sons are married, and we enjoy six grandchildren (so far), five here in Bellingham.
 - Prior to marrying Bill, I was a single mother with three children for five years, navigating childcare, work and school activities.
 - My husband and I provide housing for a young family with two children. The mother is a Grads student, the father does not yet have a high school degree. We see the challenges they face.
 - As the YMCA CEO, my husband sees the needs of many families who are the farthest from opportunity. I see the same through my work with Mount Baker Foundation.
 - While our perspective is privileged, we have some insight into the challenges faced by families with less privilege than our own.
 - I remain stunned that only 50% of our children in Whatcom County arrive the first day of Kindergarten ready to learn – with this ratio exacerbated for children of color and low income. While this is a single statistic, it is one of the few measures of Child and Family Well-being for which we have data and trend lines. Committing to the expansion of childcare and early learning is a significant element to improving this trend line – but not the only one. Children need stable families, created by stable housing, stable nutrition, parent employment with sustainable wages (requiring

educational pathways) and parent education and champions. You've heard that it takes a village to raise a child – some parents are still waiting for that village to show up.

▪ **Professional (but still Personal) Interest**

- As Executive Director, I help to facilitate the work of Mount Baker Foundation. The Board has three areas of focus, all of which impact Child and Family Well Being but one which is specifically focused on this topic. MBF's Children and Families Committee believes the following:

Healthy childhood development begins before pregnancy with the health of the mother and the family into which the baby will be born. The Children & Family Committee's interests span pre-maternity education, support for pregnant mothers and their partners, the health of the baby at birth, the development of the child from birth on, and the support and empowerment of parents as promoters of their child's development. Inequities and negative social determinants of health disrupt normal child development and can lead to poor adult health and social functioning. Mount Baker Foundation's committees work collaboratively with the population served and with other community agencies and service providers to address the root causes of health disparities. Our approach is two- and three-generational and strives to support the strength, health, and resiliency of the family.

References

- **Dr. Ken Gass**, President, Mount Baker Foundation Board of Directors, retired pediatrician. kgass@gmail.com (360) 671-1993
- **Tom Sebastian**, CEO, Compass Health. Tom.Sebastian@compassh.org (360) 789-3051
- **Don Goldberg**, Director of Economic Development, Port of Bellingham, and Whatcom County. dgoldberg@portofbellingham.com (360) 715-7375

Contact Information

Debbie Ahl (360) 393-2599
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d.ahl@edgewateradvising.com
d.ahl@mtbakerfoundation.org

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force and provide this supplemental information.

My best,

Debbie

Debbie Ahl
Executive Director