

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Final

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

2 PM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON IN COUNCIL OFFICE
CONFERENCE ROOM, 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 Vice Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. in the Council Office Conference Room.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Absent: 1 - Todd Donovan

Announcements

Committee Discussion

1. AB2022-414 Discussion and approval of Council Office budget items to include with 2023-2024 budget proposal

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, introduced and Councilmembers discussed the following list (on file) of Councilmember budget ideas:

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED AS OF JULY 15, 2022:

Council Office

- **1 FTE for Council Office to specialize in Communications/PIO, additional capacity for budget and policy analyzing**

Brown-Davis stated she wants to get an idea of what Councilmembers are looking for in this position to make sure we do not have capacity within current staffing to address some of the items that Councilmembers are looking for rather than going out for a whole full time equivalent (FTE).

Galloway briefed the Councilmembers on her vision for the proposal. She stated there might be value to our Council Office and our relationship with the community if we build capacity internally to communicate. This could include hosting an e-newsletter, communicating regularly with partners and developing those relationships with the community, funneling communication requests like a public information officer or media relations, and adding capacity for budget policy analysis.

Brown-Davis answered whether this could be built into the staff capacity that we have currently. She stated she thinks there are some of those aspects that we could cover with current staffing. She would like to give it a shot and if we cannot cover all of the desired items we could maybe go out for a lesser FTE (maybe half-time). She always wants to try to cover things with current staff before we go out for a full-time position for the office.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered whether they could budget for a half-time FTE, whether it has to be decided now, and not putting placeholders on FTEs in the budget.

Brown-Davis stated an idea would be to get us a list of those additional items, see what we can do between now and the end of the year, and then we can move forward in 2023 with a supplemental budget request if we find that we need to go with a half time or full time FTE.

Councilmembers discussed trying some internal project that is going on and seeing what kind of communication efforts could come out of the existing staff, and adding inner-governmental relations work to the list. They concurred that they could hold on the idea for now, see how it progresses through the fall, and continue making a list of the needs they are seeing and give that to the Clerk of the Council.

Elenbaas spoke about the idea of having current Council staff (maybe including additional staff) assigned to individual Councilmembers as a point of contact, having legislative aids, and whether what Galloway is looking for is something similar to the Community Outreach Facilitator in the Executive's Office.

Kershner stated she would be supportive of looking at this and she is happy to start forwarding ideas to the Clerk on various projects or things that additional or current staff could do.

Buchanan stated they could all consider writing down what that job looks like and specific examples of things to work on and submit that to the Clerk of the Council.

- **Information Technology (IT) Needs**
 - **Option for Councilmember work phones**
 - **OneDrive/OneNote/Teams**

Galloway briefed the Councilmembers on the ideas such as dedicated County work phones, IT needs such as OneDrive, an ability to manage documents in live form, using Teams to have additional video technology, or whatever other IT needs our Council Office might have.

Councilmembers discussed how they would quantify that budget request and the ideas proposed.

Cathy Halka, Council Legislative Analyst, answered a question about where the Council Office has gone with the Teams idea with IT.

Brown-Davis stated she can follow up on those items with Perry Rice (IT Manager).

Councilmembers discussed having a County work phone, what OneDrive and OneNote do, and how they could help the Councilmembers.

Brown-Davis stated she will check in with Perry to get some solid numbers and she will shop it around administratively via email with responses back to just her.

Halka spoke about possible quorum issues with shared documents.

• Funding for paid internship program in the Council Office - pilot program for rest of county?

Brown-Davis briefed the Councilmembers and Councilmembers discussed whether they would be able to have their own intern or have one for the office, the fact that it would take some infrastructure to ensure that the experiences are good and it would require staff capacity to manage the program, checking in with IT about what the rules are since paid interns would probably be considered employees, whether there have been paid internships in the County in any other department, and what the range of cost is for one intern.

Councilmembers concurred that they would like to get more information on how much it would cost.

Climate Action Program

- **Funding for 2 FTE supervised by the Climate Action Manager:**
 1. **Data Analyst (GHG emission assessment, manage GIS, and climate data dashboard) and**
 2. **Climate Action Planner (work across our existing plans/frameworks such as for comp plan, floods, infrastructure, etc. housed under PW, but have an ability to work with PDS).**
- **The need for budget authority to allow for project funding and grant matching for CAP implementation - ~\$500,000**

Galloway briefed the Councilmembers

Buchanan asked whether she has coordinated with the Public Works Department on this.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered how the Administration would like to look at this. He stated the Administration has been having some internal conversations on a couple of these items. He would think that if they could gage interest and then connect in to the departments that are working on these items that would be a good next step. He answered whether the budget authority (which may be a placeholder) is something the Administration would frown on and asked for some clarity from Galloway. He stated that operational support for an FTE is one thing but budget authorization for some different efforts associated with carrying that plan out would be probably needed as the next step. However, he is not sure the Administration is ready to do that now since the position has not been hired and it may not be in the Executive's 2023-2024 budget.

Kershner confirmed that Galloway is not thinking that the Council Office would manage the two FTEs for the Climate Action Manager and spoke about letting the departments put together their own budgets and not directing the departments on FTEs that they need to hire or certain amounts of money that they need to set aside for potential projects at this time.

Schroeder stated if Council goes through this list that has been submitted and there are items that the Administration is talking about including into their budget we would be more than happy to carry that out as Council direction and recommendation into the Executive budget and we can continue these conversations for the next three or four months until the Council decision comes out later this fall. Keep him updated on the list of priorities that the Council would like the Administration to look into. He answered whether Kayla Schott-Bresler, the Strategic Initiatives Special Programs Manager, would do any of this work including the data analysis.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE REMAINING ITEMS ON THE LIST:

Broadband

- **Staff capacity, equipment, and materials for dig once implementation/broadband deployment**

Forestry

- **Funds to contract services for forest management plans for Canyon Lake**

Community Forest and Stewart Mountain Community Forest (these in addition to the Lake Whatcom Park forest management plan RFP already lined up in finance)

Housing

- **Establishing seed funding for land bank to help acquire property for affordable housing**
 - **Explore Local Improvement District as possible model County Fleet Transition/Electric Vehicle Infrastructure**
- **Funding to install 20 electric vehicle charging stations across county facilities and parks**
- **Estimated \$10k-\$15k per charger (waiting for confirmation from Rob Ney) Whatcom Racial Equity Commission**
- **~\$100,000 - modelled off DV Commission funding, matched by City of Bellingham - to support staff, member compensation, and other operational costs.**

Immigration Resource Center

- **Matching funds to help support the City of Bellingham's potential efforts to stand up an Immigrant Resource Center to expand services for immigrant communities.**

Public Safety/Criminal Justice Reform

- **Progress/status update on 2017 VERA Institute of Justice Report (accomplishments to date, remaining items and recommendation.**
- **IPRTF/SAC support for reports/needs assessments.**

Requests of Administration

- **Increase county funding for the Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence by \$50,000.**

Kershner spoke about a few items on the list that she has some questions on and does not know if she would support under the categories of Housing (Establishing seed funding for land bank to help acquire property for affordable housing), Immigration Resource Center, and Public Safety/Criminal Justice Reform. She asked whether they have been requested to give an increase to the Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence and whether the \$100,000 for the Racial Equity Commission is in addition to what they are already receiving. If we are talking about requests for general County-wide budget items she would like to keep that submission opportunity open.

Buchanan spoke about the progress/status update on 2017 VERA Institute of Justice Report. And he stated the IPRTF/SAC support for reports/needs assessments is just a general IPRTF budget request. He has requested the task force co-chairs to get information to him so he can submit that through our office. As far as the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) support, he does not know if they are going to go beyond 2022 with any budgetary needs but they will think about that in the next couple of weeks.

Galloway stated some of the items on the list were just providing opportunity for Councilmembers to give a head nod to say these are things we would love for the Administration to explore, some will turn into Council Office Additional Service Requests (ASRs), and some are for the Council operations budget.

Brown-Davis stated the budget is due on the third of August and she needs to know what the Council Office needs to do ASRs for to include with their submission, such as additional funding for the Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence. She asked whether that item is something we should be asking the Administration to do or if she would need to do an ASR to add \$50,000.

Schroeder stated they are aware of the domestic violence commission's request and are considering it to be included into the Executive's recommended budget. They are also in discussions on the Racial Equity Commission. He cannot confirm that it is going to match the City of Bellingham's dollars right now but he does know that Executive Sidhu will be looking to help fund that moving forward. The new Strategic Initiatives Special Programs Manager will be working on budget needs for the Racial Equity Commission. Additional conversations would have to be had around the Immigration Resource Center. He does not think there has been a lot of discussion with the Executive in planning for budgets associated with it. The Executive is working with the Public Works Department concerning expansion or additional dollars for the Climate Action Program. It may be helpful to hear what is not on this list from Councilmembers' perspective. Send it to the Administration and they can respond back at the July 26 or August 9 Council meeting about whether they are anticipating to include the ideas and how.

Buchanan stated he would work on the Vera study.

Kershner asked how our community gets their requests in. It might be something we want to broaden and put out there.

Councilmembers and Brown-Davis discussed King County's model of having Council grants for projects that Councilmembers want to do, and what Council interest would be in doing an ASR for \$35,000 for each Councilmember to get \$5,000 to do small community grants. The Council Clerk will put together some information.

Kershner stated she likes the idea of the interns and the Councilmember \$5,000 grants, she would like to get away from Councilmembers having to give up travel money for other purposes like laptops so maybe we build some more money into our budget for technology, and continue to look at and develop housing for seniors and seniors with special needs or medical needs in our communities as well as the staff to support them.

Councilmembers and Brown-Davis discussed what they would do next, including getting cost information on interns, County work phones, and OneDrive. They can talk about the Communications proposal offline. The other items are going to go to Administration, and Barry is working on the VERA and IPRTF items.

Brown-Davis asked if Councilmembers would be in support of remodeling the front of the Council chambers to remove the center Clerk's desk so they have the capacity to have other and less formal meetings in that space. Councilmembers discussed the idea and whether Brown-Davis had talked to the courts about how that might affect jury orientation. Brown-Davis stated they can start with just figuring out funding and seeing how much it would cost. If there is interest, she can work with Facilities and IT just to get some prices. Councilmembers gave a general thumbs up.

Brown-Davis asked if there was anything else they would like her to write up an ASR for. She stated there was also one more thing about Boards and Commissions that she would like to check on.

Frazeley spoke about looking at the technology budget so related purchases do not have to come out of Councilmember travel accounts.

Brown-Davis answered how much the Council Office budget will be increasing in the next biennium. She will get them the numbers for increases in salaries and benefits.

Kershner pointed out that we have not spent as much on paper over the last two years because everything has been online, so there should be some money there.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

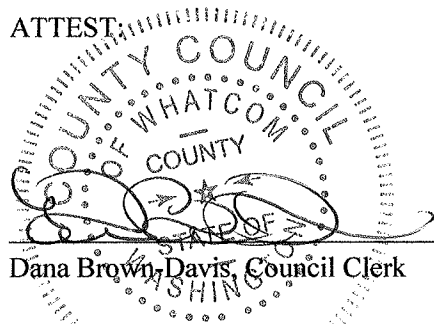
There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on August 9, 2022.

ATTEST:



Dana Brown Davis, Council Clerk

Kristi Felbinger
Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Todd Donovan
Todd Donovan, Council Chair