



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Cathy Halka, Legislative Analyst

RE: Council Office Contracts for 2021 (AB2020-382)

DATE: September 23, 2020

The Whatcom County Council Office is responsible for contracting for videographer and hearing examiner services, and these contracts expire December 31, 2020. Council staff is working to plan for service for 2021 and would like feedback and direction on a path forward for the following contracts:

1. Videographer

Currently, a videographer live-streams Council meetings on YouTube, formats recordings for broadcast on BTV, and creates DVDs for Council Office archives. Additional considerations include:

- Contract is under \$40,000 and does not require Council approval.
- Contract allows for renewal by amendment for 2021.
- Current provider will no longer be available to provide services in 2021.

Staff recommends waiting to contract for videographer services until a time when Council meetings are held in person in the Council chambers again. In the meantime, staff will broadcast meetings live online via Zoom and the Legislative Information Center. Council meetings will be broadcast live on the Whatcom County YouTube channel, when possible. Council meetings will not be broadcast on BTV until such time as a new videographer is identified via an RFP process and contract.

2. Hearing Examiner

Michael Bobbink has been providing Hearing Examiner Services to Whatcom County for over 25 years. In 2019, Council staff issued an RFP, and Michael Bobbink was the sole responder. Last year was the first pay increase Mr. Bobbink received in 5 years, and at 10% was less than the 13% cost of living increases provided to County staff during that same period. The 2020 contract amount is comparable to other hearing examiners in other Washington Counties, and the County would pay a similar cost if a contract were based on a per case rate, which is typical of contracts with legal firms. Additional considerations include:

- Contract is over \$40,000 and requires Council approval.
- 2020 contract amount is \$97,661.65, allows for renewal by amendment for 2021.
- Whatcom County has around 40 hearings per year
- County does not provide medical or retirement benefits to the Hearing Examiner.
- Contractor agrees to share the burden of budget reductions via a 5% reduction in pay for 2021.
- Staff recommends a contract amendment be brought forward for Council approval, including an extension of the contract term to December 31, 2021 and a contract amount of \$92,778.56.