

# **Whatcom County Council Public Works & Health Committee**

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



## **Committee Minutes - Final**

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024**

**1 PM**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 2:05 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT [www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Kaylee Galloway  
Jon Scanlon  
Mark Stremler

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

## **Call To Order**

Committee Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

## **Roll Call**

**Present:** 3 - Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmler

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Ben Elenbaas

## **Announcements**

### **Special Presentation**

1. [AB2024-139](#) Presentation from Health & Community Services Response Systems Division regarding diversion programs, program data, and collective impact  
  
Malora Christensen, Health and Community Services, read from a presentation (on file) about the Alternative Response Team (ART), which is a law enforcement diversion program that responds to nonviolent specific behavioral health calls in the City of Bellingham instead of law enforcement. She also spoke about data regarding the Ground Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programs. She answered what the interest is from the other six cities (other than Bellingham) in these programs, and stated that GRACE and LEAD are both county-wide programs, but she thinks they will see the development of more county-based diversion programs in the next few years. She answered what is next for some of the diversion programs based on the needs in the community, and whether they have seen any barriers in operating them that should be addressed in the County Code. She stated an investment in workforce is one key thing.  
  
Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated there is no County funding going into the LEAD and ART programs and the GRACE program is paid for by the Behavioral Health Fund. The programs are not supported by the County's General Fund, but they are always looking to identify other funding sources to help support the existing infrastructure and also to grow the programs.  
  
Christensen answered whether there is anything they should be adding to the Council's State lobbying agenda, and stated they are doing what they can at the local level, but there is so much that they need in terms of infrastructure being built by the State. She answered what the barriers are that are keeping people from getting into the LEAD and GRACE programs and stated there

are people whose needs are not as high and who do not get into intensive wraparound service programs because they do not meet the criteria.

Alysn Everbeck, What-Comm 9-1-1 Deputy Director, answered who is making the calls that ART is responding to and what types of incidents are being called in. She stated the types of calls mostly fall into three buckets: those calling for help for themselves and who do not necessarily need law enforcement but need someone to talk to and to help figure out next steps, those calling for a loved one for something like a welfare check, and the community calling in to report behaviors that are disruptive.

Christensen answered how people know they can call 9-1-1 and get non-law enforcement responses. She spoke about the 9-8-8 number which is available for when someone is having a mental health challenge, but stated people do not necessarily know about that number or the times that services are available, so they can just call 9-1-1 and the County is not advertising anything else for now. She answered whether they are fully utilizing their budget, whether all their positions are filled, whether they would hire more people if they had more money, and whether they would have more good outcomes if they had more people on the ground. She stated the need is great and they have a wait list for both GRACE and LEAD. Increasing those services could serve more people, but Health and Community Services Department is also looking to the Council and Executive's Office to answer how big this should be. She answered questions about data collection around drug use and how that fits in to a client's stabilization, and she described individualized service plans and how staff work to address whatever it is that is causing the person to continue to be in crisis. This is really about having a person-centered approach and making sure it is low-barrier. She answered where the response team is based and what their response time is to the far reaches of the County, and stated the ART program is a pilot program only in the city of Bellingham. They are looking at the effectiveness of the program and asking whether it should be expanded to places beyond the city. She spoke about the co-responder program that just launched with the Sheriff's Office.

Galloway stated she did a ride-a-long with the GRACE and LEAD programs and that it was life-changing for her.

Christensen answered whether they have plans to share this data with other communities that are considering diversion programs. She spoke about programs that are happening at the State level and stated the data is also going to get bigger as they go. They would like to share the County's story.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

2. [AB2024-197](#) Report from the Public Works Department

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, reported on division updates and highlights, department staffing, and communications, and she answered questions. She answered how many people listen to the department's Councilmember podcast and stated they have 6,000 people that follow Public Works on Facebook from which people can also access the podcast. She answered a question about the international flood task force and how Canada is to work with when it comes to flood issues, and stated the conversations are good but it is hard to make change since there are two distinct governments.

Elenbaas stated the water that comes across the border does not meet the standards that we set for ourselves in Whatcom County and he felt no one cared up there.

Kosa answered whether they are coordinating work for fish remediation in the Black Slough with work for flood issues in the same area, and she stated the ideal is to always look holistically but that coordination does not always happen.

Stremmer spoke about national work zone awareness and the safety of people who are working on the roads.

Kosa answered questions about the Neighborhood Native Landscaping Program (previously the Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP)) and she and Councilmembers discussed whether barriers to getting people to participate have been addressed.

**This agenda item was REPORTED.**

### **Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council**

1. [AB2024-095](#) Resolution approving the Whatcom County Water District No. 2 Water System Plan
- Cathy Halka, Council Legislative Analyst, briefed the Councilmembers and answered whether they do this for every water district in the county. She stated she believes it is for all the districts in unincorporated areas of Whatcom County.

***Galloway moved*** that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

Galloway stated she may have a few amendments. There is a whereas clause for each of Planning and Development Services Department and Health and Community Services Department regarding issuing a Local Government Consistency Determination, but she does not see one for Public Works. She wonders if it would be possible to add that. The second one is in the whereas statement on page two, lines five through seven. It says the “County Council” has reviewed the plan for compliance and she would like to make sure that someone on Council’s staff has, in fact reviewed it thoroughly. If not, then she would suggest they change that language to “Whatcom County” has reviewed the plan.

Halka stated Council staff has not reviewed the plan, but the reviews by Public Works, Planning (PDS), and Health have been made and the Public Works review is listed in the whereas statement on page one, line 19.

***Galloway moved*** to amend page two, line five of the resolution to read “Whatcom County has reviewed” as follows:

WHEREAS, ~~the County Council~~ Whatcom County has reviewed the Whatcom County Water District 2 Water System Plan for compliance with the approval criteria set forth in RCW 57.16.010(7) and RCW 57.02.040 and finds that the Plan satisfies these criteria, subject to certain conditions.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, stated staff could prepare a substitute resolution with that amendment for this evening if they approve this motion.

Councilmembers and staff discussed the motion and Galloway stated she would not make a motion for the first amendment she suggested because it is already in the resolution. Galloway stated her motion would be to recommend (a substitute resolution) as amended to the full Council, but they needed to vote on the amendment first.

The motion to amend carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 3 - Scanlon, Stremmler, and Galloway

**Nay:** 0

**Galloway's motion that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT(S) carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 3 - Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremmler

Nay: 0

**Items Added by Revision**

There were no agenda items added by revision.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

**Jon Scanlon-via email 4/3/2024**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE