

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**CONVENING A PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD TASK FORCE ON EMPLOYER INFECTION CONTROL AND SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDANCE**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with RCW 70.05.060 it is the responsibility of the Whatcom County Health Board to supervise all matters pertaining to the preservation of the life and health of the people within its jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Board has been directly elected by the citizens of Whatcom County to develop policy which balance multiple competing priorities within the community including public health and economic resiliency; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Board shall supervise the maintenance of all health and sanitary measures for the protection of the public health within its jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Board has provided policy and financial support for the Health Department during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Department's COVID-19 strategic plan describes the six intervals of a pandemic and defines the eight public health roles in pandemic response, which include support for incident command, surveillance/epidemiology, community mitigation, medical care and countermeasures, testing, risk communication, state and local coordination, and essential services, and;

**WHEREAS**, as Whatcom County moves into the strategic plan designated Deceleration Interval of the pandemic, the Whatcom County Health Department is employing a three-fold approach to suppressing the spread of COVID-19; and

**WHEREAS**, the first approach is to ensure community capacity for testing for the purpose of providing information on who has the virus to contain spread and prevent infection; and

**WHEREAS**, the second approach is to conduct case and contact investigations for surveillance/epidemiology for the purpose of increasing understanding of disease behavior and spread to support containment and mitigation; and

**WHEREAS**, the third approach to prevent further spread guidance on using non-pharmaceutical interventions such as social distancing and infection control measures to lead community mitigation efforts, for the purpose of slowing the spread of the virus in the community and reducing the impact on healthcare infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, examples of infection control measures at businesses currently open are temperature checks and health scans upon entry, masking, wearing gloves, single use packaging, sanitizing surfaces and hands, relaxed/suspended sick leave policy, and physical barriers like Plexiglas; and

**WHEREAS**, examples of social distancing measures at businesses currently open are limiting patrons, creating vulnerable population hours, traffic control, floor decals, and curbside pickup or delivery; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington State is re-opening other sectors of the economy in a phased approach; and

**WHEREAS**, some businesses and other organizations in Whatcom County may have difficulty in knowing how to develop or adopt social distancing and infection control measures, especially those that are small, local, aren't represented by or a member of an association, employ illiterate or non or limited-English speakers, have regulatory or financial barriers, or a business model that does not allow for social distancing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Public Health Advisory Board will evaluate the COVID-19 safety materials already available through associations, other jurisdictions, and employers with existing operations, verify their compliance with Governor Inslee's orders, and provide guidelines that comply to sectors, as applicable; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Department will provide, in partnership with the Public Health Advisory Board, a forum for peer support and expert guidance for businesses and other organizations to adopt their sector's social distancing and infection control standards, or to create alternatives that meet public health prevention standards while allowing businesses to open safely; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Department recognizes that with limited capacity for enforcement, the Public Health Advisory Board has a second and equally important task of creating a process whereby businesses are partners in the infection control and social distancing measure development, and business recognize the importance of the measures so they can be implemented effectively; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Department and the Regional Economic Partnership will coordinate their efforts to establish a process to both support the safety and economic resiliency of the region as we begin to open up business and the economy in Whatcom County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Health Board seeks to stand in support of businesses, non-profit organizations, faith communities, and other organizations and their ability, upon the direction of the Governor, to re-open with infection control and social distancing measures in place to ensure the safety of their employees and customers; and

**WHEREAS**, the national chain big box stores have remained open, currently have significant traffic and sell a wide variety of products in addition to groceries (such as clothing and furniture) which has made social distancing goals difficult to achieve; and

**WHEREAS**, allowing smaller, locally owned stores that sell similar items to reopen, will actually increase social distancing by spreading the same number of consumers amongst a greater total amount of retail floor area; and

**WHEREAS**, business owners, many of whom feel they are facing financial ruin are increasingly unconvinced of the value and fairness of preventing them operating, while allowing the big box stores to sell the same products they do, which if left unaddressed, is likely to lead to widespread non-compliance across all businesses sectors; and

**WHEREAS**, historically locally owned stores contribute much more volunteer time and money than big box stores do, supporting local non-profits which are an essential part of our society; and

**WHEREAS**, it is critical our local non-profits are also able to survive as unemployment rises, but this will much less likely if the local businesses they depend on don't survive.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Whatcom County Health Board that:

The Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) shall convene a task force as provided for in WCC 24.01.051.A.4 to provide local infection control and social distancing guidance materials in sector-led, peer-supported forums to ensure barriers and solutions are addressed and employers have confidence they have the tools to support the safety of their employees and customers. In order prevent confusion as to the role of the task force versus other business groups the task force shall be limited to this one specific purpose; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:**

The Public Health Advisory Board and Health Department shall:

1. Prioritize guidance for businesses included in the Governor's Phase II plan,
2. Provide materials to the member organizations of our county's Regional Economic Partnership (REP) for promotion and distribution to their respective members, and
3. Focus on a "train the trainer" with REP member organizations before focusing on providing direct delivery of advice to individual businesses,
4. Release individual sector infection control and social distancing guidance materials as they become available
5. Recognize that releasing good guidance first and following up with more perfect guidance later is much better way of encouraging compliance that waiting until perfect guidance is available

**APPROVED** this \_\_\_\_ day of May, 2020.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

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Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Approve Via Email by Royce Buckingham  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor