

Whatcom County Council as the Health Board

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



Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, July 30, 2024
10 AM**

Civic Center Building Conference Room / Hybrid Meeting

**JOINT HEALTH BOARD/PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING -
HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN
INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL
360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

**Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmler**

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Health Board Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmer

Absent: 1 - Ben Elenbaas

Roll call of PHAB members.

Sterling Chick, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) chair, called the roll and the following people were present:

- Teri Bryant
- Kelli Carroll
- Sterling Chick
- Madison Emry
- Amy Harley
- Joni Hensley
- Guy Occhiogrosso
- Emily O'Connor
- Adrienne Renz
- Jon Scanlon
- Julie Terry
- Ashley Thomasson
- Shu-Ling Zhao
- Leah Wainman

Announcements**Meeting Materials**

AB2024-018 Meeting Materials for Health Board July 30, 2024

This agenda item was **RECEIVED**.

Health Officer/Health Director update

There was no update.

Permanent Supportive Housing/22 North Roundtable

Sterling Chick, PHAB chair, introduced the discussion.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated he welcomes the Council's interest in addressing the behavioral health crisis in our community. He stated he is very concerned about the deaths at 22 North which prompted the extreme suggestions to hold back the funding of 22 North. However, this requires deep review of the background information before making any conclusions or decisions. He spoke about the resolution that has been proposed (AB2024-469, scheduled for Special Council on August 30, 2024), and the nature of and funding for the housing at 22 North. He stated it is obvious that 22 North needs more services provided by certified professionals, but it will never become a treatment facility. Any parents or guardians are welcome to take their wards to any other facility they like. He spoke about the need for housing solutions for highly vulnerable community members.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, introduced a presentation.

Ann Beck, Health and Community Services, stated they wanted to share some information with the group that they have not been asked for at this point and she read from a presentation (on file). She spoke about what 22 North is, how it fits into our housing continuum, past and present challenges they have had, steps taken by Whatcom County and the Opportunity Council to remediate issues, who lives in these buildings, the procedures related to tenant welfare, the percent of funding that the County provides and how 22 North would be impacted without that funding, opportunities for improvement, and next steps.

Michaela Mandala, Health and Community Services Department, answered what some of the goals are for the County's contracts around 22 North, and stated they include making sure the building is filled, that people are connecting to behavioral health services, and finding out why people are leaving the facility.

Beck answered what the contractor tasked with evaluating Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs will be looking into, and stated they will be looking at the whole system and the funding of it, what is needed, and where we are lacking in the larger resources.

Mandala answered when they expect to have information back from that evaluation, and stated the contractor will submit information to the County on each deliverable in the contract as it is completed. January should be the first report, then March and April, and then the last report should be around June of 2025.

Beck answered what the most immediately actionable things are on the list (in the presentation) of opportunities for improvement at 22 North and what the timeline is for those things. She listed some possibilities and stated the number one thing is maintaining the staff that is working there. That is the part that scares her the most.

Ashley Thomasson, PHAB, stated one thing they have learned and has been underscored, is the need for increased communication from the County, from the programs, and from them on the effectiveness of the work they are doing. She spoke about the measurables in the contract and how they seem to be looking at a lot of negatives. It is no surprise that people are questioning the effectiveness when the data points center around negative aspects instead of also taking about the good of the program.

Leah Wainman, PHAB, asked whether the things listed in the presentation as opportunities for improvement are speaking to the Opportunity Council in their work or whether there are also opportunities for improvement for the County as the holder of the contract. She stated she would like to also understand the needs of the other funding sources for 22 North and what their take is on this.

Beck stated the opportunities for improvement list is just looking at 22 North, but she thinks there is definitely room for improvement on our own. She stated they are working on a dashboard of information but they would like to know what information would be most helpful for them to share with the Council, PHAB, and the Executive.

Emily O'Connor, PHAB, stated this is a bit of a funnel and they are looking at the very tip of that and trying to make tweaks without consideration of the bigger picture. She stated we had decided several years ago that we as a community were going to prioritize those with the most complex needs because they are experiencing the most harm from lack of resources, but we did not do the other half, which was to make sure we had the program models fully resourced to do that work. This causes challenges in program outcomes because there is a mismatch of need and resource available, and that is something they should not put on the backs of people who do the work they have been asked to do. She is supportive of building treatment facilities, but the question is how they do that and still meet the need of the people they are seeing.

Teri Bryant, PHAB, stated although we do not have enough permanent supportive housing, we do have more than one, so if an individual is not doing well in one project they collaborate to see if there is an opportunity

for that person to go to another project where they will do better. She stated it is so hard to adjust to housing after a long period without it and spoke about an example. She hopes this conversation will not be about housing *or* treatment because we need housing *and* treatment.

Mandala answered what the screening requirements are for potential tenants of 22 North and Beck stated they could send Council the eligibility requirements.

Wendy Lawrence, Opportunity Council, answered how they are handling the lease agreement, the enforcement of the lease, and the rules of the property, and disruptive behavior. She stated they follow landlord tenant law and spoke about the rules.

Byrd spoke about the high number of police calls as it relates to this property, a number of deaths that have taken place in the last few months, and a large number of community complaints from neighbors and surrounding businesses. He asked how many people there are that are currently under the enforcement process of the described rules.

Greg Winter, Opportunity Council Director, stated they have had a big improvement in the number of police reporting to 22 North and he spoke about the number of times the police department actually showed up there before 2023 compared to 2023 and 2024. He also spoke about neighbor complaints and positive neighbor experiences.

Byrd asked how many people have been evicted from this property over the life of the property and how many people are in an eviction process or have more than two consecutive 30-day vacation notices.

Beck stated they could give them the reports and Winter stated about 30 people have been asked to leave over the life of the project.

Kelli Carroll, PHAB, stated the needs that have arisen from the opioid crisis and the need for improvements at 22 North are really tied to each other. What they need to see here is a thoughtful response from the County and policy-makers that recognizes that permanent supportive housing programs across the country and in our state are grappling with this complex set of issues and the complex presentation of people who are using opioids and us trying to house them in the best way we can. The work that needs to happen next needs to have a data-informed approach.

Public Comment

The following people spoke:

- Christopher Deile
- Heather K
- Rose Crow
- Misty Flowers

Hearing no one else, Buchanan closed the public comment period and stated it would continue at the next meeting (Special Council August 30, 2024) in the Council Chambers.

Other Business

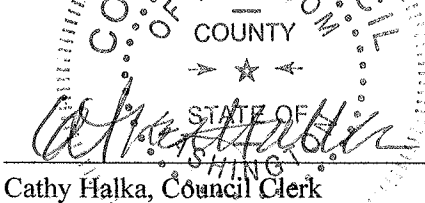
There was no other business.

Adjournment

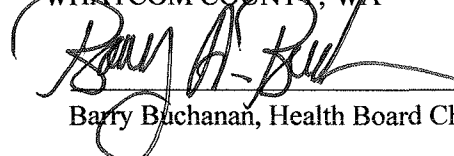
The meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on September 10, 2024.

ATTEST

The seal of Whatcom County, WA, is a circular emblem. It features a central five-pointed star with the words "STATE OF" above it and "WASHINGTON" below it. The outer ring of the seal contains the text "COUNTY OF WHATCOM" at the top and "WASHINGTON" at the bottom, separated by small stars.
Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Buchanan".
Barry Buchanan, Health Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristi Felbinger".
Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription