

**Whatcom County
Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee**

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

9:50 AM

Hybrid Meeting

HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 10:50 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON,
SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil,
OR CALL 360.778.5010)

COUNCILMEMBERS

Todd Donovan
Carol Frazey
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Chair Kathy Kershner called the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, and Kathy Kershner

Also Present: Tyler Byrd, Barry Buchanan, and Kaylee Galloway

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Frazey moved to approve Consent Agenda items one through fourteen. Councilmembers voted on the Consent items (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2023-484](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and FCS Group to conduct a rate study and funding analysis for the Birch Bay Watershed & Aquatic Resources Management (BBWARM) District, in the amount of \$61,440.00 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

Frazey moved that the Contract (FCZDBS) be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

2. [AB2023-486](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide child development services to eligible children, in an estimated amount not to exceed \$87,570

Frazey moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

3. [AB2023-487](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Whatcom Center for Early Learning to provide child development services to eligible children, in an estimated amount not to exceed \$106,960

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

4. [AB2023-488](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Environmental Science Associates to complete a climate vulnerability assessment, in the amount of \$69,997

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

5. [AB2023-494](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Military Department for FY2022 Operation Stonegarden (OPSG), in the amount of \$97,500.00

Frazezy moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

6. [AB2023-495](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Tetra Tech, Inc. in support of the Point Roberts Drainage Study, to perform surface water planning and design services related to the growing need for solving stormwater problems in the Point Roberts area, in the amount of \$128,745

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

7. [AB2023-496](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interagency agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Commerce to receive state funds for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and development regulations update, in the amount of \$700,000

Frazey moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

8. [AB2023-497](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an agreement between Whatcom County and Children’s Home Society for reimbursement of services provided by the Parents for Parents Program (P4P) for one year July 2023-June 2024 in an amount not to exceed \$42,536.78

Frazey moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

9. [AB2023-498](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization to acknowledge and fund Whatcom County’s participation in the North Sound Integrated Care Network in the amount of \$523,788 for a total amended agreement amount of \$972,979

Frazey moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

10. [AB2023-499](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization to fund the Recovery Navigator Program to enhance Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programming, in the amount of \$512,455

Frazey moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

11. [AB2023-503](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an Interlocal Agreement

between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham for construction of a crosswalk at Samish Way and Galbraith Lane, in the amount of \$17,000 (amount revised to \$22,100)

Frazezy moved that the SUBSTITUTE Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

12. [AB2023-512](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to administer the Housing and Essential Needs program in the amount of \$5,106,192 for a total amended contract amount of \$7,917,456

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

13. [AB2023-517](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Siemens Industry Inc. to provide the energy management software migration, in the amount of \$216,791.81

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

14. [AB2023-519](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a subrecipient agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham to provide pass-through grant funding for the What-Comm Communications Center in the amount of \$49,050

Frazezy moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazezy, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Special Presentation

1. [AB2023-515](#) Report from the Assessor's Office

Rebecca Xczar, County Assessor, read from a presentation (on file) and gave an overview of the functions of the Assessor's Office, budget-based levies, and assessing property values. She spoke about a letter received from the Department of Revenue (DOR) stating Whatcom County's percentage ratio of sale prices to assessed value has been under 90 percent, how the Assessor revalues the 5/6 of county properties that are not in the current year's inspection area, legislative changes raising the income threshold to qualify for property tax exemptions and the additional staff time that will require, the results of appeals made by Petrogas, a large number of appeals on assessed values this year made to the Board of Equalization (BOE) and a change to the Assessor's Office process due to the extreme volume, upcoming budget requests, how tax exemptions shift the tax burden, and Assessor website updates.

She answered questions about the low real property ratio addressed by the DOR and whether that means our assessments are higher than market value or lower. She stated it means our assessed values are too low and will essentially be going up next year. They have been at around 87 to 88 percent of market value and the goal is to get over 90 percent this year. She answered questions about whether a higher percentage means that taxes will go up, how budget-based levies affect taxes, and how assessments affect the revenue of levies.

She answered questions about the changing thresholds for exemption and deferral programs for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and disabled veterans. Kershner stated she would like Xczar to come back to give a presentation on this tax exemption portion to understand better what the process and system look like. Xczar answered whether the extra staff workload will just be absorbed or whether there will be an FTE request coming in a supplemental budget, and stated there will be an FTE request.

She answered questions about the Petrogas appeals including how much will be going back into the General Fund. She stated all of the property owners in Whatcom County will see some tax relief next year because of this since everybody has been paying a little more while Petrogas has been paying less for so long. She answered whose responsibility it is to pay taxes when assessments are being disputed and how that works, what she anticipates the appeals from 2019-2022 will yield, and whether she has an estimate of how much more an average property owner would have been paying due to the Petrogas appeal.

She answered whether she is aware of any seniors or people with disabilities who would currently qualify under the exemption previously discussed and who are losing their homes due to property tax increases, whether we have a program to refer those people to that would help them file for a deferral or exemption, whether some properties within the Open Space Farm and Agricultural Land program are being treated differently than other properties in that program or whether the whole program is being treated incorrectly, and whether corrections to inconsistency will result in a larger tax shift to properties outside of that program.

Frazey stated she appreciates the updates to the website and their work on Petrogas and stated we may need to talk to the BOE Clerk in the Council Office and see what kind of help she needs in light of the big increase in appeals.

Clerk's note: Kershner stated that item number eleven in the Consent Agenda (**AB2023-503**) was a substitute contract that they recommended to the full Council.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2023-470](#) Ordinance amending the 2023 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 11, in the amount of \$250,000

Frazey moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Randy Rydel, Public Works Department, answered what they are doing with this item and stated the next agenda item is setting up a project-based budget for our new Lummi Island ferry replacement and modernization project and this is seeding some money into that.

Frazey's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

2. [AB2023-475](#) Ordinance establishing the Lummi Island Ferry Replacement and System Modernization Fund and establishing a project based budget for the Lummi Island ferry replacement and modernization project; CRP #919008

Donovan moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION and stated this the most tangible thing he has seen showing that we are really close to being able to build a new boat, and all the different funds coming

into this one fund is kind of exciting.

Councilmembers discussed the amount of money that is in the account.

Donovan's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

3. [AB2023-502](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a new grant agreement between Whatcom County and the State of Washington Department of Ecology to provide for continued implementation of the Swift Creek Sediment Management Action Plan Projects, in the amount of \$4 million

Frazey moved that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

James Lee, Public Works Department, answered what this \$4 million will cover since it is a fraction of the overall ask and stated the big element will be the construction of approximately a 13-acre wetland mitigation site next year.

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, stated they will continue through the legislative session to try to find funds to fully fund this project but will use the \$4 million in the meantime to get things moving. She answered whether we have plans for bringing some State and Federal people up to do a site visit and a tour and to explain the urgency and need for more funding and stated they have not made plans for it at this point but that is a great idea and is something she will offer up.

Frazey's motion that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

4. [AB2023-508](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a Local Agency Agreement and execute the Federal Aid Project Prospectus between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation, for federal aid funds for the construction phase of the E. Smith Road & Hannegan Intersection Improvement project, in the amount of \$3,952,642

Frazey moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Doug Ranney, Public Works Department, answered whether this is a new construction project and briefed the Councilmembers. He answered whether we were planning to do a round-a-bout in the intersection next year but need to act quickly to secure the additional \$1.5 million and whether we have all the rights-of-way for the project. He stated their right-of-way package is submitted to the State for review right now and they feel they are in a good position to have that approved shortly.

Frazey's motion that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

5. [AB2023-514](#) Request approval for the County Executive to award Bid #23-34 for the purchase of two (2) rescue boats from West Coast Marine Services, located in Bellingham, in an amount not to exceed \$104,702.20

Frazey moved that the Bid Award be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Bill Elfo, Sheriff, answered whether they are working in conjunction with Search and Rescue (SAR) on these rescue boats and whether it is a necessary purchase. He stated these are to be used by Search and Rescue and that they coordinated with them. It is mainly to deal with situations that may arise in the East County like they experienced in November of 2021. It is grant funded and they are working with SAR to strategically locate these where they would be available for as quick a response as possible.

Doug Chadwick, Undersheriff, stated these were added in the 2023-2024 budget. They were going to purchase one in each year and then came back and asked if they could order both at the same time. This will be a joint effort between the marine unit and SAR and will provide additional rescue boats in the event of flooding situations like they saw in the east part of Whatcom County.

Byrd stated there was a serious lack of boats by people who had the skills and training to be out there and for that reason, we had a lot of people, who were not trained, taking their boats out there to try to help. He cannot think of a better purchase in case this happens again in the future.

Galloway stated she is excited to see this go to a local business and asked whether they might be willing to set up a tour for Councilmembers to see the boats being made.

Kershner stated she is happy they are coordinating with Search and Rescue.

Frazey's motion that the Bid Award be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

6. [AB2023-516](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant contract amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to expand the Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) program in the jail in the amount of \$174,945.00 for a total amended amount of \$505,075.00

Donovan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Wendy Jones, Sheriff's Office, briefed the Councilmembers and answered where people are able to access the same services (medication for opioid use) in the community that they were being given in jail once they have been released from jail. She stated 95 percent of their offenders are on Medicaid or some version of that and when people show up on the release roster, Medicaid opens back up again. Also, every offender is told about and given a resource list of clinics they can go to in the community and are released with a prescription for three days' worth. However, the majority do not continue the program when they are in the community. She answered where the warm handoff is to the provider that is going to pick up their case in the community and whether we have re-entry specialists that are working. She stated one of the two specialists left the position so their provider is looking for a replacement, and there is also an issue with the fact that people are released 24/7 and sometimes someone cannot be there waiting for them.

Kershner stated it sounds like it is an area where we need to focus some efforts and hopefully, if we pass the jail initiative, we will have some funds for that.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated our Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) teams are working closely with jail staff to make sure that there is a warm handoff if it is during office hours, and they are in the process of hiring a behavioral health aid which is a transportation position that can be called upon for someone not enrolled in GRACE or LEAD. She stated they know this is a really key system gap with

all of their partners.

Jones answered whether people are on their own if they are released outside of working hours and whether that might be a place to start to see if they can make some adjustments. She stated it is not uncommon after hours or on weekends that one of the jail's transportation-qualified staff will give someone a lift to where they need to go.

Perry Mowery, Health and Community Services, stated he recently initiated linking the services of the re-entry team and Lifeline Connections who provides the services within the jail.

Kershner stated maybe some of the surplus in the Behavioral Health Fund can be used to help bolster some of these programs as well.

Galloway asked whether they could up the prescription from three days to a longer period of time to give people more time to make arrangements and connect to resources, and whether they could address the times people are being released and learn what that looks like and why it is sometimes outside of regular hours.

Jones spoke about the legal obligations for releasing people from jail and that people can go right to a pharmacy when released and are also referred to walk-in clinics.

Frazezy asked what percentage of the people they are releasing actually go to the walk-in clinic and Jones stated they do not know for sure because they do not have a way of checking up on it.

Donovan's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

7. [AB2023-520](#) Request authorization for County Executive to enter into a contract between Chuckanut Health Foundation and Whatcom County for administration services in support of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission in the amount of \$235,592

Donovan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Strategic Initiatives Special Programs Manager, briefed the Councilmembers on the contract and answered questions about

how members of the appointment committee are appointed and the funds that will support both the Commission and the appointment committee.

Donovan's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Strategic Initiatives Special Programs Manager, stated the committee just approved, through the Consent Agenda, a contract to provide services to children with developmental disabilities through the Opportunity Council. The Health Department has a companion contract prepared that is to serve additional needs such as access to physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy for children without developmental disabilities. This was originally going to be funded out of the General Fund. However, we had Health Department staff on medical leave during the budget process, and we neglected to budget for this. In order to avoid a service disruption, we are asking that the Committee consider a motion and recommendation to Council to use up to \$160,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund lapse from the Public Health bucket to fund this additional contract. Council has already approved the contractual authority, but we would like your approval to transfer the funds to use the Public Health ARPA lapse to cover the costs instead of the General Fund.

Kershner moved that we use \$100,000 in ARPA lapse from the Public Health bucket to fund the services to children through the Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) program.

Schott-Bresler stated they are hoping for a motion to use up to \$160,000.

Kershner amended her motion to used (up to) \$160,000 from APRA lapse from the Public Health bucket to fund services to children under the Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) program.

Councilmembers and Schott-Bresler discussed the motion and Galloway stated if they could see the paperwork before a final decision tonight that would be helpful.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

MOTION SUMMARY:

Motion Approved to use up to \$160,000 of unspent ARPA funds from the Public Health bucket to fund services to children under the Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) program

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Kathy Kershner-via email 9/11/2023

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kathy Kershner, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

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