

# **Whatcom County Council as the Health Board (Special)**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
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## **Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**JOINT MEETING OF HEALTH BOARD/PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD**

**Tuesday, October 6, 2020**

**9 AM**

**Virtual Meeting**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Rud Browne  
Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Carol Frazey  
Kathy Kershner

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

## **Call To Order**

Health Board Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. in a virtual meeting and opened the meeting by singing a song.

## **Roll Call**

**Present:** 7 - Rud Browne, Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas and Kathy Kershner

**Absent:** None

## **Welcome, Intended Outcomes and Introductions**

Chi-Na Stoane, Public Health Advisory Board Chair, introduced Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, spoke about the following proposed outcomes of this meeting:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Health Board, the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB), and the Health Department.
- Reflect and have a conversation about how to have civil dialogue about challenging public health conversations.

Holly O'Neil facilitated the meeting and started with introductions. The following participants stated their name and what public health issue they are especially interested in right now and why:

- Chi-Na Stoane - PHAB Chair - Health-related issues such as obesity, health care-associated infections, and air pollution addressed through the lens of equity by being in a harmonious place.
- Sterling Chick - PHAB Vice Chair - Promoting the interest of children and families through an equity lens.
- Astrid Newell - Health Department - Focusing on the wellbeing of children and families and the healthy development of the youngest children.
- Kathleen Roy - Health Department - Children and families and the opportunities to make big changes in people's lives and building foundational public health services that meet the gaps in the community.
- Steve Bennett - PHAB - The social and environmental structures that increase or decrease the risk of infectious disease for specific populations as well as effective interventions and transmission.

- Carol Frazey - Health Board/County Councilmember - Kindergarten readiness, children and families, and how we can make changes in hiring practices so that everyone is represented.
- Barry Buchanan - Health Board Chair /County Council Chair - Serving populations that are vulnerable (seniors, people with disabilities, and the homeless).
- Todd Donovan - Health Board/County Councilmember - The COVID-19 crisis.
- Erika Lautenbach - Health Department Director - How we in government create or remove barriers, help or hurt, and can staff in order to make sure our policies and structures can provide the most good to the greatest number of people and not create more barriers for those who need additional support.
- Cindy Hollinsworth - Health Department - What's behind the scenes in people's access to living wage jobs and education which will help them have opportunities for stable housing and health care.
- Anne Deacon - Health Department - Historic and current under funding of behavioral health support and services to American citizens, how that impacts our criminal justice system, and other Federal issues that communities have the burden of resolving.
- Leah Wainman - PHAB - Impacts of COVID-19, issues concerning families and children right now, and the increasing disparities in households.
- Rud Browne - Health Board/County Councilmember - Foundational public health, mental health and early interventions.
- Ben Elenbaas - Health Board/County Councilmember - Mental Health and the negative health impacts of fatherless homes.
- John Wolpers - Health Department - How the environment affects people and how people affect the environment, how to bring everybody together to address all the different issues that come up, and the COVID-19 crisis.
- Kathy Kershner - Health Board/County Councilmember - The well-being of students from high school to young adults, the foster care system, Vitamin D deficiencies of people in Northwest, and making good policy decisions to help people who are on the edge.
- Tyler Byrd - Health Board/County Councilmember - How we lead our community as a first line of defense through the COVID-19 crisis.

### **Review Role & Responsibilities of PHAB, the Health Board, and the Health Department**

O'Neil, facilitator, referred participants to the Roles and Responsibilities

Matrix on Agenda page 2.

Buchanan gave a history and outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Health Board.

Stoane gave a history and outlined the roles and responsibilities of the PHAB.

Lautenbach outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Health Department and shared on the screen national guidelines, core services, and priorities of Public Health. She spoke about how the three bodies communicate and coordinate their efforts.

O'Neil opened the floor for participants to share insights on how the groups do well working together and how they could improve and the following people spoke:

- Frazey spoke about the COVID Employer Support Task Force created by the PHAB and how the Health Department has stepped up in dealing with COVID-19.
- Bennett spoke about his appreciation for the opportunity for the PHAB to present their research and to Health Board for facilitating the formation of community task forces. He would like to see more communication between the PHAB and the Health Board.
- Stoane spoke about the COVID Employer Support Task Force and described how collaboration of all three bodies is what made it successful.
- Newell spoke about being thankful for the work the Health Board has done around children and families and stated ongoing support of all the entities would be valuable.

*Clerk's note:* Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, joined the meeting.

- Elenbaas stated he appreciates opportunity to meet everyone in the three groups, and the chance to have dialogue and respect opinions of those we do not normally surround ourselves with.
- Kershner spoke about having proposals brought forward from the Health Department that come with data in a usable format and Anne Deacon's steadfast work on projects that she promotes.
- Deacon stated they try to find ways to measure their work with evidenced-based practices, but they could improve on being able to communicate their complex and detailed information with the Health Board and helping each other understand the other's world.

## **How Do We Model and Encourage Civil Dialogue Around Challenging Public Health Conversations?**

Sterling Chick spoke to the participants about why having a civil dialogue is so difficult, especially when the topic is important to everyone. In dealing with conflict, how we explain why something is happening completely drives what we think should be done. It is about "what is the problem" and not "why it is the problem." To have healthy dialogue you have to have the same vision and use the same language when talking about that vision.

The following people spoke:

- Buchanan stated he appreciates what Sterling said about speaking the same language.
- Frazey spoke about shared language and asked for examples of how a conversation can be about the "what" and not about the "why."
- Lautenbach spoke about how she learned that it is more important to understand why someone believes something and not just what they believe. Experiences shape belief and that can be the start of conversation and of understanding each other. Building relationships is important.
- Donovan spoke about looking at other counties and how they structure their Health Boards and having a health professional on the Board.
- Browne spoke about all of the new leadership within the County and the City of Bellingham when we started dealing with COVID-19 and acknowledged and thanked those leaders including Lautenbach.

## **Wrap Up - Set the Stage for the Health Board Meeting, Closing Comments and Appreciations**

Buchanan thanked everyone for being there and stated he would like to do this type of meeting twice a year and he looks forward to discussions in the Health Board.

Stoane stated we do have a shared vision. We have to agree to come together and struggle together.

## **Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Barry Buchanan, Health Board Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription