

RESOLUTION NO. _____

ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COVID-19 INTERIM ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN TO RESPOND TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WITHIN WHATCOM COUNTY CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant hardship to our local economy which in turn has led to substantial unemployment, and

WHEREAS, in previous localized emergencies Whatcom County has been able to rely upon the financial resources of the State and Federal governments to recover, however as COVID-19 is a global problem future State and Federal government funding is uncertain as it is being stretched to the limit, and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County agencies and departments have done an excellent job at reducing the rate of new infections from COVID-19, managing the increased demand for social services, procuring supplies of essential Personal Protective Equipment, and will continue to have to devote considerable resources to these needs for the foreseeable future, and

WHEREAS, additional resources now need to be identified and dedicated to the challenge of leading the community onwards to economic recovery, and

WHEREAS, the County, the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham have an established Regional Economic Partnership (REP) agreement where the Port serves as the state-designated Associate Development Organization (ADO) responsible for promoting and encouraging economic growth within Whatcom County, and

WHEREAS, the purpose and goals of the REP and ADO include:

- Retain and attract livable wage jobs and to assist businesses, entrepreneurs, and other local organizations to thrive
- Partner to create a thriving community for all
- Provide expertise in financing, planning, and technology to help start, develop, or grow business
- Promote Whatcom County as a great place to live, work and do business-
- Connect businesses with economic development services and skilled workforce resources
- Help enhance and grow cross border trade opportunities with Canada,
- Work collaboratively with our local and regional partners to create a vibrant community of higher education learning, prosperous agricultural lands, high tech businesses, marine manufacturing, and local food processing

WHEREAS, local government officials, businesses, non-profits and the community need a COVID-19 interim economic recovery plan to be developed and available as rapidly as possible, to be replaced by a long-term, detailed strategy once State and Federal recovery funding has been defined and secured, and

WHEREAS, while the County does not have any significant untapped local financial resources, the county is blessed with considerable human capital and economic acumen within our community, which can be drawn on to assist the ADO in the immediate development of a COVID-19 Interim Economic Recovery Plan (CIERP).

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Whatcom County Council hereby requests that
2 the Port of Bellingham, to do the following through the Associate Development Organization:
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- 4 1. The ADO should be appointed as the primary lead agency responsible for the research and
5 development of an COVID-19 Interim Economic Recovery Plan as outlined in Exhibit A, and
6
- 7 2. The ADO should report any new information which could have a moderate or material
8 impact on the county's economic recovery to Incident Command, the County Council,
9 County Executive, Port of Bellingham, the Mayors, Tribal Chairs and Health Department, and
10
- 11 3. The ADO should assume responsibility for messaging and communications, to the press and
12 community related to the business and economic recovery aspects related to the COVID-19
13 crisis, and
14
- 15 4. The ADO should provide updates, ideally every week, to the community on the status of
16 economic recovery efforts, and
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- 18 5. If technical resources and analysis are required to assist in the development of the CIERP in
19 excess of resources available to the ADO, the ADO may provide Whatcom County Council a
20 detailed request of funds for that purpose, not to exceed \$50,000.
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22
23 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, by the Whatcom County Council acting
24 as the Whatcom County Health Board that the Whatcom County Health Department shall do the
25 following:
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- 27 1. Add the strategies outlined in Exhibit B to its existing plans in support of the County's
28 economic recovery, and
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- 30 2. Support the efforts of the ADO to produce the CIERP as rapidly as practical, and
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- 32 3. Limit responsibility for messaging and communications, to the press and community to
33 those related to the health and social service aspects related to the COVID-19 crisis, and
34
- 35 4. Report any new information which could have a moderate or material impact on the
36 county's economic recovery to Incident Command, the County Council, County Executive,
37 Port of Bellingham, the Mayors, Tribal Chairs and ADO, and
38
- 39 5. Provide updates to the ADO, ideally every week, on the status of the Health Department's
40 contributions to the economic recovery efforts, to be included in ADO's weekly reports to
41 the community, and
42

43 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, to help reduce the future costs to the
44 County of responding to COVID-19 strategies 2(a) and 2(b) in Exhibit B should be added to
45 Incident Command's existing plans.
46

47 **ADOPTED** this _____ day of _____, 2020.
48

49
50 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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52
53 _____
Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

54
55 _____
Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

56 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
57
58 _____
59
60 Civil Deputy Prosecutor
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62
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5 **EXHIBIT A**
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7 ADO Deliverables:
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9 The goal will be to engage in Local and StateWide to develop a comprehensive picture of the
10 County's economic recovery needs and a plan to address them.

11
12 The ADO will provide recommendations to policy makers in our cities and county as to what actions
13 our community can take, consistent with the Governor's orders that will have the greatest positive
14 impact with the least amount of resources in the shortest amount of time.

15
16 The recommendations from the ADO will be advisory only and it will be up to policy makers to
17 decide what action to take.

18
19 The deliverables should include, but are not limited to:
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- 21 1. **Immediate response** - the ADO is encouraged to work with the Health Department and
22 the member organizations of Team Whatcom to develop a program to promote safe
23 reopening of businesses. The purpose is to improve consumer confidence by rapidly
24 positioning our community as regional leaders/active partners in disease transmission
25 prevention and safe social activities.
26
27 2. **Impact analysis** (within 30 days) - Through extensive outreach, establish and quantify the
28 sectors of the economy affected:
29 a. Businesses expected to see a return of demand and thus recover in due course (e.g.
30 Auto repairs)
31 b. Businesses likely to recover with limited assistance (e.g. breweries and specialty
32 manufacturing)
33 c. Sectors likely to find recovery challenging (e.g. restaurants, retail, donor funded
34 non-profits and higher education)
35

36 As some impact analysis has been done, the focus may be more on ensuring all key
37 sectors are identified, including the critical inter-relationships between them.
38

- 39 3. **Local actions available** - Local government finances are also under considerable stress
40 and can't be relied upon to provide funds to improve the business climate. Therefore, the
41 focus on locally sourced assistance should be in the form of human capital drawn from
42 within our community. Some examples of how this could be used may be:
43 a. Mentorship matching
44 b. Business management education
45 c. Cash flow management
46 d. Local collaboration
47 e. Promotion of "buy local" policies
48 f. Resource sharing
49 g. Resiliency training
50 h. Local medical supply manufacturing and reuse technologies
51
52
53

54 Local and Statewide consultation:
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56 REP will complement their human capital with the State Commerce Department, Washington
57 Economic Development Association (WEDA), the City of Seattle's economic development group, as

1 well as local and regional experts (representing both small and large businesses) to support and
2 implement the governor's four phased approach to opening up the economy safely. REP will
3 emphasize what makes the Whatcom County region better as well as different and how we
4 capitalize on this moving forward.

5
6 REP's web presence on the Port of Bellingham's web page will continue to maintain up to date
7 information on public grants, program assistance and COVID-19 general information for businesses
8 both small and large.

9
10
11 This group could be augmented with representatives from different sectors who will be sought out
12 to contribute to their respective industries. If practical, the team could collaborate and leverage
13 resources with similar groups in Skagit, San Juan and maybe Island Counties to build a more
14 regional response.

15
16 Additional goals:

17
18 Recognizing that uncertainty causes businesses to conserve cash and delay rehiring, while certainty
19 and optimism bring business investment and job growth, the team should seek ways to increase
20 local employers' and employees' confidence in the future.

21
22 Recognizing that every adversity in life provides opportunity, the team should look for ways this
23 disaster can be leveraged to make our economy and community stronger and more resilient in the
24 future.

EXHIBIT B

Health Department deliverables:

The Health Department's critical role in helping our economy recover should include:

- Disease prevention education and enforcement as businesses reopen
- Establishing and promoting best practices to reduce the County government's contribution to the cost of providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to third parties
- Developing a program to provide information to businesses regarding best practices for preventing COVID-19 transmission