

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Final

VIRTUAL MEETING - SPECIAL COUNCIL

Thursday, April 9, 2020

1 PM

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

Council Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. in a virtual meeting.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

ANNOUNCEMENT**EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, requested that they revert back to meeting every two weeks. He listed the various staff members who have to be involved in the meetings and spoke about the time commitment that is required. The Health Department Director and Unified Command senior staff are stretched to their limits answering questions from some of the Councilmembers. Elected bodies in most other jurisdictions are meeting less often. He suggested that the Council could meet as often as they like but he would let his staff and other people know to attend every two weeks. Council could send them emails of their conclusions and discussions and they will attend to them and get back to the Council as soon as they can.

SPECIAL UPDATES AND DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. [AB2020-117](#) Discussion of strategies related to COVID-19

Buchanan responded to Sidhu's request in the Executive Report for the Council to meet every two weeks and stated they had planned to discuss this today. He reported that he talked to Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, and they decided to suggest meeting on an eight-day cycle which is every other first day of an operational period plus meet on the regularly scheduled Council Meeting dates since those are required by the Charter. He presented a proposal for an upcoming schedule of meetings (on file).

Donovan moved to adopt the proposed schedule as presented and Elenbaas seconded.

Byrd suggested a friendly amendment to meet once a week but change the time so it does not correspond to the 3 p.m. small city meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Councilmembers and Sidhu discussed the reason for the proposed schedule, whether meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays could be kept to two hours so

that they could attend the small city meetings, scheduling Tuesday and Thursday meetings at 11 a.m., Department Heads only attending every two weeks, making sure meeting items are in the scope of the Governor's order and meeting only on the regular Council meeting schedule.

Donovan withdrew his motion **and moved** to meet on the regular County Council meeting schedule and when called upon by the Unified Command or when someone needs them for special reasons. The motion was seconded by Frazey.

Buchanan stated the plan would be to start at 11 a.m.

Byrd asked if they would still vote on the emergency ordinance today or whether they would need to wait for two weeks to consider the regular ordinance (AB2020-173) on the same topic that was introduced.

Councilmembers and Brown-Davis discussed the motion and agreed that it temporarily be held until discussion of the next agenda item.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED. See motion on this item below.

OTHER ITEMS

1. [AB2020-176](#) Emergency ordinance establishing a process for information to be disclosed to the Division of Emergency Management, the County Executive, the County Health Board, and the public during a public health emergency

Browne clarified that he put forward a normal ordinance (previously introduced as AB2020-173) and was not the one who requested it be on this agenda (AB2020-176) as an emergency ordinance. He is happy for the ordinance to go through the normal ordinance process and not particularly pushing for it to be presented as an emergency ordinance.

Councilmembers and Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, discussed the motion, the fact that an emergency ordinance would have to be updated after it expires, how two ordinances came to be presented, the process for going forward with the regular ordinance or the emergency ordinance and the rationale for waiting to consider the regular ordinance.

Donovan moved and Browne seconded that the Ordinance be WITHDRAWN. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Browne, Buchanan, Donovan and Frazey

Nay: 3 - Byrd, Elenbaas and Kershner

Absent: 0

SPECIAL UPDATES AND DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. [AB2020-117](#) Discussion of strategies related to COVID-19

Clerk's note: This is a continuation of a discussion from earlier in the agenda. See AB2020-117 above.

Buchanan returned to the earlier motion to meet on the regular County Council meeting schedule and when called upon by the Unified Command or when someone needs them for special reasons, and to have a start time of 11 a.m.

Councilmembers and Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, discussed the motion and the meeting time and concurred that the starting time should be 12:30 p.m.

The amended motion to meet at 12:30 p.m. on the regular County Council meeting schedule and when called upon by the Unified Command or when someone needs them for special reasons carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Kershner, Browne, Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas and Frazey

Nay: 0

Byrd gave the following updates from today's meeting of the Whatcom Unified Command Policy Group meeting:

- They heard a presentation about the issue of food security including the goal to provide food security to all Whatcom County residents in need during the pandemic.
- Having more conversations about social distancing and giving people more options to be engaged in activities and the possibility of having to cancel Fourth of July events.
- A status update about how Unified Command is looking to move to a single command structure.
- How elected officials can answer questions about where Whatcom County is on the curve of the crisis and whether people can start going to events.

Buchanan and Sidhu briefed the Council on the meeting yesterday of the Northwest Regional Coordinated Response to COVID-19 with Whatcom, Skagit, Island, Snohomish and San Juan Counties. Each counties shared its respective status. Coordination makes it possible for counties to share resources. Buchanan will send a summary to the Councilmembers and they discussed whether other Councilmembers can be involved or listen in to the

meetings.

Elenbaas spoke about local food systems and stated events like this show the need to have a very strong ability to provide our food locally and the short sightedness of the Council on land use policy has hindered our ability to fully exploit the local food system.

Frazezy spoke about the opportunity to sign up for automatic updates from the Unified Command on whatcomcovid.com.

Sidhu thanked the Council for amending the Council’s meeting schedule going forward.

Bill Elfo, Sheriff, stated he appreciates the Council’s support and all that they are doing.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND A MOTION WAS APPROVED.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on July 7, 2020.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE