

# **Whatcom County Council as the Health Board**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
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Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
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## **Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**Tuesday, September 7, 2021  
10 AM  
Virtual Meeting**

**VIRTUAL MEETING - Joint Health Board and PHAB**

### **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 10:13 a.m. in a virtual meeting.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas, and Kathy Kershner

**Absent:** 1 - Rud Browne

**Announcements****Welcome**

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, introduced new staff in the Health Department and announced that it is the last week for Health Officer Greg Stern. She also announced that next Friday is the last day for Anne Deacon.

The following people spoke:

- Sue Sullivan, Health Department and new Environmental Health Manager
- Greg Stern, Health Officer
- Amy Harley, Health Department and new Co-Health Officer
- Greg Thompson, Health Department and new Co-Health Officer
- Anne Deacon, Health Department
- Sterling Chick, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Chair

Holly O'Neil, Facilitator, presented an overview of today's session and the following participants introduced themselves and shared something they have appreciated about the work of others who are here today over the last year:

- Steve Bennet, PHAB
- Astrid Newell, Health Department
- Ben Elenbaas, Health Board/Council member
- Carol Frazey, Health Board/Council member
- Mike Hilley, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Manager
- Tyler Byrd, Health Board/ Council member
- Jake Anderson, PHAB

**COVID Community Health Impact Assessment (CCHIA)**

1. [AB2021-519](#) Discussion on COVID Community Health Impact Assessment

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, gave a presentation.

Holly O'Neil, Facilitator, led a discussion and the following people spoke about what opportunities they see for action and as a priority based on the study:

- Barry Buchanan, Health Board/Council member, spoke about childcare
- Astrid Newell, Health Department, spoke about childcare
- Greg Thompson, Health Department, spoke about homelessness
- Sterling Chick, PHAB, spoke about kindergarten readiness and childcare
- Tyler Byrd, Health Board/Council member, spoke about addressing repercussions of COVID-19 including child mental health and suicides, children falling behind in their education as a result of the pandemic, impacts of job loss due to being unvaccinated, building public trust in health decisions, unemployment, and homelessness
- Steve Bennett, PHAB, spoke about looking at what the Health Board and PHAB have jurisdiction to engage with, kindergarten readiness, childhood resiliency, mental health for young adults, and identifying which priorities lack resources and people working on them
- Carol Frazey, Health Board/Council member, spoke about kindergarten readiness and childcare
- Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, spoke about the list and how it hits on several points of the lifecycle. They need to address immediate challenges like homelessness but also go earlier in the lifecycle and focus on a 20-year strategy.
- Mike Hilley, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Manager, spoke about homelessness and behavioral health

*Clerk's note:* Meeting members took a break from 11:21 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

- Greg Thompson, Health Department, spoke again and spoke about impacts on the community from COVID-19 and what issues were trends before the pandemic and are not directly due to COVID-19
- Steve Bennett, PHAB, spoke again and spoke about figuring out how the Health Board, Health Department and PHAB can work together and help each other to take action on these problems

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**

## **Racism is a Public Health Crisis Resolution**

### 1. [AB2021-520](#) Discussion on Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Steve Bennett, PHAB, gave a presentation.

Holly O'Neil, Facilitator, led a discussion and the following people spoke about opportunities for Health Board action:

- Shu-Ling Zhao, Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission development team, spoke about the work of the commission and how it is joined with the work described in the presentation
- Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation, spoke about a request to find opportunities to partner in the work with the Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission
- Astrid Newell, Health Department, spoke about collaboration and updated the group on a recent application submitted by the County Executive's Office on behalf of the County to become a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, and other governmental jurisdictions working on the same things
- Todd Donovan, Health Board/Council member, spoke about the points of the Racism Resolution (as listed on the third slide of the presentation), making sure it is not putting too much expectation on the Racial Equity Commission, and whether they should be looking beyond the commission to make those things happen
- Bennett spoke about determining which group will do what and identifying how the PHAB can support the work that needs to get done
- Donovan asked whether the Executive's Office needs to be involved in at least the second two bullet points on the slide mentioned above
- Carol Frazey, Health Board/Council member, spoke about hiring practices of the County, forming a baseline by department of the makeup of each department, and determining who should do what
- Jake Anderson, PHAB, asked what they are doing about making the promoting of diversity of race within county boards and commissions a reality
- Bennett spoke about engaging with the community and explaining the rolls of the Health Board, PHAB, and Health Department as it applies to this topic
- Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, spoke about an internal County working group already in place to identify strategies across the county
- Ben Elenbaas, Health Board/Council member, spoke about policies

(outside of the racial equity conversation) that have come from COVID-19 that have done nothing to build up the infrastructure to help public health (vaccine policies driving people away from the health care, emergency management, and education sectors), and why advocates of the public health are not taking a harder look at the situation and advocating for the health of everyone by standing up for providers

- Thompson responded to Elenbaas' concerns, and the impacts of COVID-19 on public health issues
- Frazey spoke about Elenbaas' comments, the need to talk about concerns, and that everyone has a voice
- Frazey spoke again about racial equity and about going over the demographics of awarded contracts that are going through the County
- Bennett spoke about making sure that policies that are enacted have been analyzed and understood to make sure they do not disproportionately impact people of color within the county
- Newell spoke about more valuable resources, internal data, and ideas about how other jurisdictions have involved their Health Boards coming forward in the near future concerning racial equity. There may be some recommendations to have some additional investment in this area.
- Donovan spoke about how recommendations about racial equity (such as in contracting processes) should come to the Health Board and whether the board should be proactive in giving the PHAB topics to look at
- Sterling Chick, PHAB, spoke about how COVID-19 has made health issues worse, and looking for opportunities to make a difference in people's lives instead of just listing priorities
- Elenbaas apologized for his emotions when he spoke previously and shared a personal example of a court employee that has natural COVID-19 antibodies but will no longer be needed in her job if she is not vaccinated. He would like to look at the vaccine policies and whether they are helping the community.

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**

### **Update on Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) Funding**

1. [AB2021-521](#) Update on Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) Funding

Astrid Newell, Health Department, presented about Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) and answered questions about what "food" program means as mentioned in the funding for Environmental Public Health (slide

12 of the presentation), and when they will hear back on how things (regarding allocations) are progressing at the State level.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, thanked Newell for her work and stated the Councilmembers will see formal requests coming through Council within the next month or so.

**This agenda item was REPORTED.**

**Wrap up**

The following people gave closing comments:

- Holly O'Neil
- Sterling Chick
- Barry Buchanan

**Items Added by Revision**

There were no agenda items added by revision.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription