

**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, February 7, 2023
11:20 AM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY NOON (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON AT 311
GRAND AVENUE SUITE 101, 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 11:20 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Absent: None

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

Announcements

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2023-077](#) Ordinance amending the Whatcom County Budget, request no. 2, in the amount of \$6,395,173

Donovan moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

The following people answered questions:

- Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services
- Kathleen Roy, Health Department
- Alyssa Pavitt, Health Department
- Ann Beck, Health Department
- Elizabeth Witowski, Health Department
- John Gargett, Division of Emergency Management

They answered whether there are eight FTEs being requested and what the burn rate is, whether they will still be able to fund these positions after American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and grants go away, why these positions did not get incorporated into the regular budget since some are from December, what the youth prevention specialist is for the Health Department and whether it is grant funded, how long the rural Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) grant will go and what happens when it goes away, whether the Veteran Specialist Position will be co-housed at the Bellingham Vet Center which abides by a vaccine mandate for that position, whether the Veteran Service Officer (VSO) that Whatcom County hires will be required to be vaccinated or whether there is any way to work around that, why the \$2 million for assistance to flood victims has taken so long and whether there are any processes that the County Finance division can

recommend we change to make these things more expedient, whether eligibility for flood assistance reimbursement is based on time of signature or retroactive to July first of 2022, and whether they should look at timelines and procedures for contracts and rules for dollar amount thresholds for Council contract approval.

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

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

2. [AB2023-078](#) Ordinance amending the project based budget for the Plantation Rifle Range Lead Reclamation and Capital Improvement by adding \$700,000 for a total amount of \$1,355,000

Donovan moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Christ Thomsen, Parks and Recreation Department, answered whether the Council already approved \$700,000 for this project, how long the outdoor and indoor ranges will be closed, whether leasing out or having a private entity come to manage the range or take over operations is something they are looking at, what the obstacles to that might be, and who would spearhead that consideration.

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

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

3. [AB2022-731](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Hunt Forensics for increased costs of services in the amount of \$893,449.13 for the total amount of \$3,356,602

Frazey moved that the Contract be AUTHORIZED.

Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services, answered what process the County used when they bid out this work, whether they used any of the national recruiting resources for Medical Examiners being that it is a difficult challenge to attract people to our county, whether the committee that reviewed the application of Dr. Hunt agreed that she was qualified to

serve and recommended her to the Administration, and whether Council could get evidence of that recommendation.

Kershner stated her concerns are around the process of negotiating a contract and then coming to the Council less than a year later to request a twenty five percent increase, and some unprofessional standards that need to be corrected including the Medical Examiner's email address.

Dr. Gary Goldfogel, former Whatcom County Medical Examiner, spoke about his tenure as the Medical Examiner and concerns about how it was portrayed by the current Medical Examiner.

Frazezy spoke about the amount requested and changes that need to be made compared to other jurisdictions.

Galloway stated she wants to honor the increase in workload and new dynamics but her questions are around how things are managed, and how collaboration is occurring between families and family support services, Sheriff's Office, and Prosecuting Attorney's Office. There are few pending complaints so she is thinking through whether we have a process for complaints, how we are ensuring families and those in the death process are being supported and respected, and how we are identifying some of the existing challenges right now. She is wondering if we can try to resolve some of those challenges now and hold off on this funding request, or whether the funding request is required to achieve some of those remedies.

Schroeder stated change is hard and bringing the Medical Examiner in-house to the County Administration would help establish the certainty of what the standards are so they are not changing from one Medical Examiner to another. The Medical Examiner is currently updating the policies and procedures. He stated his proposal would be to take that document, review it with the Medical Advisory Committee, make some specific improvements to the coordination aspects Galloway was talking about, and bring that back to the Council. He believes these funds are needed for the continued operations.

Goldfogel spoke about his offer to have a transition with the new Medical Examiner, the reasons given for the request for an increase, and whether there is a misunderstanding of how he did things and why.

Donovan stated he did not think Dr. Hunt's previous presentation was a criticism of Dr. Goldfogel but he will need to re-watch it. He is trying to

sort out what policies will change that are going to cost more money and whether that is the direction the County wants to go.

Councilmembers and Schroeder discussed Dr. Hunt utilizing her County-issued email address for County purposes, whether they could just approve \$300,000 for this year without delaying operations or denying service, the timing of bringing the policies and procedures document to the Council, and how the Committee would like to forward the item to the Council.

Frazey withdrew her motion that the Contract be AUTHORIZED.

Donovan moved to forward the Contract to Council without a recommendation but with the goal of getting an amended version (Councilmembers voted on this motion then had further discussion. See motion and vote below).

Schroeder asked whether the Council is interested in input from Dr. Hunt in regards to this conversation.

Allison Hunt, Whatcom County Medical Examiner, answered whether it would be feasible to approve the funding for one year and then, during that year, get more information to better understand the policy changes. She stated what she has asked for is essential and spoke about why.

Donovan's motion that the Contract be FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Frazey moved to approve Consent Agenda items one through seven.

Ann Beck, Health Department, answered a question about Consent Agenda item number six (AB2023-101) about how the winter shelter went and how they can continue to support the community.

Councilmembers voted on the Consent items (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2023-067](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment

between Whatcom County and Washington State University to continue the jointly shared costs for faculty positions and program support for WSU Extension in the amount of \$255,071 for a total amended contract amount of \$2,986,499.90

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

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

2. [AB2023-085](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a two year interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham for work crew services, in the amount of \$55,250.00 per year

Frazezy 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

Absent: 0

3. [AB2023-091](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Lifeline Connections to provide substance use disorder assessments and post-assessment treatment coordination for people releasing from the Whatcom County Jail or who are referred through criminal/legal referral channels, in the amount of \$138,642

Frazezy 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

Absent: 0

4. [AB2023-094](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Military Department for FY2019 Operation Stonegarden (OPSG), in the amount of \$54,069.48

Frazezy 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

Absent: 0

5. [AB2023-099](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Ferndale for County coordinated opioid misuse prevention and abatement strategies within the Ferndale community, in the amount of \$15,434.66

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

Absent: 0

6. [AB2023-101](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Road2Home to operate overnight severe weather shelters in the amount of \$40,561 for a total amended contract amount of \$79,729

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

Absent: 0

7. [AB2023-111](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Sean Humphrey House to provide a forgivable grant and recoverable loan for the acquisition of an affordable assisted housing unit in the amount of \$200,000

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

Absent: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Kathy Kershner-via email 2/9/2023

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kathy Kershner, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE