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To:
Executive Jack Louws & Whatcom County Council

From:
Susan Marks, Director, Bellingham Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence, smarks@dvcommission.org, 360.312.5700 x 1242

In 2014, members of the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence (DV Commission) set a goal to explore expanding our mission to include sexual assault in addition to domestic violence. Members determined that we needed to collect data to identify the need and role for the DV Commission in improving how our community institutions respond to sexual assault. In 2016, the DV Commission received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, to conduct a comprehensive Audit of our criminal legal response to sexual assault. In May 2017, initial findings from this Audit were shared at our DV Commission's Annual Meeting. Based on these findings, Commission members and community partners voted unanimously to recommend to Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham that our mission be expanded to include both domestic and sexual violence.

Since the inception of the DV Commission, there has been confusion among community partners and elected officials in Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham about the role of the Commission. There also have been questions about the way the Commission was formed, using joint ordinances in both the County and City that mirrored each other – which meant that each ordinance needed to be updated with any changes to the Commission. Senior leadership in both government agencies noted that when an entity like the DV Commission is formed by local governments to accomplish a shared mission and purpose, and jointly funded by those governments, generally there is an Interlocal Agreement put in place. Commission members agreed that it would be best to develop an Interlocal Agreement and update the ordinances to refer to that Agreement – and that it made the most sense to enact these changes at the same time we recommended an expansion to our mission.

In fall 2018, Commission members developed and approved a recommendation for an updated name, mission statement, functions, and designated membership positions. Then the DV Commission Director, Bellingham City Attorney, and Whatcom County Chief Deputy Civil Attorney worked together to incorporate those recommendations into a Interlocal Agreement.

Therefore, this Interlocal Agreement is presented both to expand the role of the DV Commission, and to have a founding document that better reflects the nature of the DV Commission as a joint venture between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham.

BWCCADV

**Bellingham-Whatcom County
Commission Against Domestic Violence**

