

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

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



## **Minutes - Final**

**Tuesday, February 4, 2025**

**10 AM**

**Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers**

**JOINT HEALTH BOARD/PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING -  
HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN  
INSTRUCTIONS AT [www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR CALL  
360.778.5010)**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Kaylee Galloway  
Jon Scanlon  
Mark Stremmler

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

**Call To Order**

Health Board Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

**Roll Call - Health Board**

**Present:** 6 - Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Jon Scanlon, Mark Stremmer, Barry Buchanan, and Kaylee Galloway

**Absent:** 1 - Tyler Byrd

**Roll Call - PHAB**

The following Public Health Advisory Board members were present:

Julie Terry, Joni Hensley, Kelli Carroll, Sterling Chick, Emily O'Connor, Robyn Phillips-Madson, Rachel McGarrity, Christine Espina, Lara Welker, Leah Wainman, Shannon Boustead, Guy Occhiogrosso, Chris Kobdich, Jon Scanlon, Amy Harley, and Shu-Ling Zhao

**Announcements**

Galloway thanked the former and newly elected chairs and vice chairs of the Public Health Advisory Board. She stated she needs to leave this meeting early today, so the Health Board will need to appoint someone to act as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**Public Comment**

The following people spoke:

- Natalie Chavez

Hearing no one else, Galloway closed the Public Comment period.

**Special Presentation**

1. [AB2025-123](#) Community briefing on Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) in the field and in clinical settings

Amy Harley, Health Officer and PHAB member, briefed the group on the presentations from the hospital partners and Emergency Medical Services and the following people presented:

- Dr. Lorna Gober, Chief Medical Officer, PeaceHealth Northwest Network
- Dr. Shannon Boustead, PHAB member and WCHCS Opioid Response Medical Advisor

- Mullane Harrington, Director Behavioral Health Services for St. Joseph Medical Center
- Dr. Ralph Weiche, EMS Medical Program Director

They spoke about measures they are taking in the emergency room and in the field and answered questions. They spoke about what they believe to be the best path to recovery for someone who uses Fentanyl, including medications, acceptance back into society, and providing the appropriate early resources. They answered whether they are collecting data regarding how many people actually go into services when they exit the emergency department. They answered what EMS is doing in the field to build trust with people so that they are open to receiving treatment or transport to the ER, and whether there is a shortage of behavioral health professionals.

Leah Wainman, PHAB, asked about how hospital, EMS, and Health and Community Services systems are working together.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, answered Wainman and spoke about coordination they are doing as a department with other partners.

Mike Hilley, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Manager, spoke about the work of the medical directors that presented and how the use of medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in the field is a game changer for EMS. He spoke about partnerships they will be working with in the future.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.**

2. [AB2025-121](#) Update from Health Director and Health Officer

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated there is interest from the Public Health Advisory Board on having status updates on progress that has been made on previously approved Council/Health Board resolutions, so they will build that into future joint meetings. She gave a status update on their severe weather shelter operations, and spoke about the work of the transportation specialist, and their hope of partnering with other agencies in the future on a shelter since she does not believe it is sustainable for their department to continue, especially so many nights in a row like it has been. She answered questions about how many people are taking advantage of the transportation provided to the Anne Deacon Center for Hope and whether they think as many or more people will take advantage of transportation from the severe weather shelter to the future 23-Hour Crisis Relief Center. She stated their transportation specialist is very busy driving people around and getting them to their next safe place and she can

work on getting data on how many have entered treatment or received medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD).

Amy Harley, Health Officer, gave general information about influenza and Avian Influenza. She stated they have not identified a case of avian influenza (H5N1) here and not had any affected dairy operations or commercial poultry farms. They have, however, had many wild bird detections and one backyard flock. She spoke about the public health actions they are taking and answered questions about H5N1 in agriculture and how it affects cattle and flock birds.

Rachel McGarrity, PHAB, asked how monitoring and management of this and next year's flu season will be impacted by declining Federal support for these initiatives and how Whatcom County is preparing for that.

Harley spoke about relying on Federal sources for information and spoke about monitoring in the county.

Galloway stated she needs to leave and join the meeting remotely and would like Council to designate a chair for the rest of the meeting.

***Galloway moved*** to have Donovan chair the remainder of the Health Board meeting.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 6 - Donovan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, Stremmer, and Buchanan

**Nay:** 0

**Absent:** 1 - Byrd

Donovan acted as chair for the remainder of the meeting and Galloway joined remotely.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

Motion approved 6-0, with Byrd absent, to have Donovan chair the remainder of the Health Board meeting.

3. [AB2025-122](#) Update from the Joint Public Health Advisory Board/Health Board Structure Working Group

The following people updated the group on the status of the working group that was established by the Health Board on October 29, 2024 (**AB2024-708**) to analyze and recommend structure of the Health Board:

- Kelli Carroll, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Chair
- Christine Espina, PHAB

They gave an overview of legislation governing the makeup of local health boards and what the workgroup has been working on since it was established. They stated they will develop initial recommendations with the PHAB on February 13th, will finalize them at the March 6th PHAB meeting, and then will transmit the recommendations to the board and County Council by March 31st.

Scanlon spoke about the workgroup and stated that whatever recommendation comes forward, it will be very well researched and thought out.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

## **Discussion**

1. [AB2025-124](#) Discussion of Public Health Advisory Board duties and vision

Kelli Carroll, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Chair, briefed the group on the vision for the PHAB for 2025 to function as an effective working board that delivers on its statutory functions. As an advisory body to the Board of Health and Health Department, PHAB's eight statutory duties are enumerated in Whatcom County Code and the Revised Code of Washington. She stated, to accomplish their vision, they are using a transparent and multi-pronged approach and she spoke about steps they have taken to function effectively, including:

- Moving PHAB to monthly meetings
- Focusing on engaging in two-way communication with the various boards, commissions and groups that are represented by PHAB members in the hub and spoke model
- Asking for monthly budget updates from the department

Christine Espina, PHAB, spoke about duties of the advisory board and how they intend to fulfill them. She highlighted three which are:

- Use a health equity framework to conduct, assess, and identify community health needs and review and recommend public health policies and priorities for the local health jurisdiction
- Promote public participation in and identify local health needs
- Review and make recommendations to the local health jurisdiction and Health Board annual budget

Stremler asked whether the Council's attorney has been brought into the discussion about joining the two groups.

George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, stated that he had previously flagged in an email that by the structure of Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 70.05.035, a reshuffling of the Health Board might change the landscape of the Health Board forever, and he wanted Councilmembers to be aware of that. They are currently in a sort of grandfathered state, but if they make a change in their structure, that is a one-way street.

Carroll stated they have flagged that there may be legal analysis that would need to occur with their recommendations to explore the full impact, and that potential code changes might be necessary to effectuate any of the recommendations should the Council wish to do so.

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**

2. [AB2025-125](#) Discussion of Health Board priorities

Councilmembers discussed what they would be interested in seeing as agenda items for the Health Board and that they should familiarize themselves with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 70.05.060 which defines the powers and duties of local health boards.

Buchanan stated he wants to make sure they keep their sights on the opioid crisis and have regular conversation or updates as they go forward in this year.

The following people discussed with Councilmembers whether the quarterly updates to the Council should be to the Council or to the Health Board and getting some clarification on that:

- Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director
- Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council
- George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Donovan asked about the PHAB duty mentioned in the previous agenda item (**AB2025-124**) regarding budget review.

Kelli Carroll, PHAB chair, stated that one of the things that is required by statute is that the health advisory board review and provide recommendation on the public health budget. That did not happen last year, and they want to set forth a process to make sure that PHAB has the information it needs to be able to provide the advice it is called to do by statute.

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**

3. [AB2025-127](#) Discussion of Health Board Chair appointment

Scanlon (Council Vice Chair) stated he and Galloway (Council Chair) have been talking about the duties of the chair and vice chair and splitting the workload, and one thing they looked into was whether the Health Board could be chaired by a council member other than the Council chair. They consulted with the attorney and there does not appear to be anything in our code or in State law that says that the chair of the County Council must be chair of the Health Board, so he would be interested in being chair of this body.

*Donovan moved* to nominate Councilmember Scanlon as Health Board Chair.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Galloway stated she fully supports moving in this direction.

Donovan stated they may want this to be formalized in the reorganization process every January.

Scanlon stated they would have to work out the logistics too for when they take action as the Council acting as the Health Board.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 6 - Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, Stremmer, Buchanan, and Donovan

**Nay:** 0

**Absent:** 1 - Byrd

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.**

Motion approved 6-0, with Byrd absent, to nominate Scanlon as Health Board Chair.

### **Other Business**

Emily O'Connor, PHAB, spoke about the statistics presented earlier regarding the severe weather shelter, and asked what can be learned about the opportunity of emergency severe weather sheltering as a linkage to more ongoing services and what support they can provide to maximize that.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated they plan to write an after-action report following the closure of the season, and they are interested in doing an assessment on ways that non-profits and the

faith community can be supportive. She would like to have some open conversations about how this can be a community opportunity rather than a department opportunity.

Scanlon stated he is thankful for the funding that came from the City of Bellingham but next year he would love to see them fund things for the shelter in a different manner. This year, their funding does not kick in until the County has expended its funds but he thinks it would be a lot better if they were supporting operations without the contingencies.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on February 25, 2025.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Scanlon, Health Board Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE