



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Whatcom County Council

**FROM:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

**RE:** Appointments to the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (WREC)

**DATE:** April 1, 2024

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I am proud to present, in coordination with Bellingham Mayor Kim Lund, our appointments for the first slate of members to serve on the [Whatcom Racial Equity Commission \(WREC\)](#). I am requesting County Council confirmation of these appointments at the April 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting

The WREC is a quasi-governmental entity [established by the Whatcom County Council in 2022](#), in collaboration with the City of Bellingham and with support from Chuckanut Health Foundation. As a conduit for ongoing community collaboration, engagement, and education, within the broader context of diversity and inclusion, the purpose of the WREC is to gather, review, and evaluate data and to make recommendations on eliminating racial inequities, in all its forms, throughout Whatcom County. The vision of the WREC is that all races in Whatcom County live, thrive, and belong for who they are, as they are, without fear, every day.

Per, Whatcom County Code [2.107](#) (Whatcom Racial Equity Commission), the first slate of Commission members shall be recommended by an Appointment Committee to the County Executive and Mayor of Bellingham. The Executive and Mayor propose appointments for confirmation by the Whatcom County Council and Bellingham City Council.

In June 2023, the County Council seated the [Appointment Committee](#) to assist with reviewing applications from community members interested in serving on the WREC. Membership of the Appointment Committee is: Dr. Vernon Damani Johnson, Dr. Francisco Rios, Eliana Steele, Dr. Pamela Wheeler, Guava Jordan, and Lee Langdon.

The Appointment Committee has met actively since June with the assistance and facilitation of Chuckanut Health Foundation. Their work started with developing a robust application and process for community members interested in serving on the WREC. You can learn more about the process by visiting [chuckanuthealthfoundation.org/wrec-member-application](http://chuckanuthealthfoundation.org/wrec-member-application) The process included acceptance of written, video, and audio applications as well as translation of application materials into five languages.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Appointment Committee met and reviewed 43 applications, ultimately compiling a recommended slate of appointees. This was a challenging task because of the



quality and quantity of applications submitted. You will see on the applications of the appointees, as well as those names not selected, the breadth of experience, knowledge and unquestionable community commitment reflected here.

When reviewing the applications there were several factors for consideration:

- Requirements of the enabling ordinance for eligibility for appointment for each role.
- The requirements of the Mayor and Executive as outlined in the enabling code and creating recommendations that were supportive of that.
  - 2.107.070 "In seeking and selecting members for commission appointments, the mayor of Bellingham and county executive shall seek to represent the broadly diverse communities across Whatcom County with consideration to geography, income level, and a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."
- The materials submitted by applicants and the various lived and learned experiences represented in the recommendations.
- The overall composition of the Commission including the Representative Member slate.

The Committee then reviewed each membership application and convened to make recommendations for [nineteen specific Commission seats](#). I am pleased to present those appointees to you today:

Rika Valladares  
Erik McFrazier  
Gabriela Montenegro  
J. Manuel Reta  
Khushdip Kaur Brar  
Terrance "TeeJay" Morris  
Rachel Rosalinda Rodriguez  
Brett Muskavage  
Eric Scott, J.D.  
Frank Lee

Jason McGill  
Lance Edward Jones  
Zeenia Junkeer  
Yazil A. Dhillpe Castro  
Julieta Garcia Suarez  
Scott Ryckman  
Chao-ying Wu, MD  
Lucia Zamora Chamorro  
Martha L. Lopez, EdD

If confirmed, these Commissioners will join representative members who are appointed to serve by their organizations, as well as Liaison members representing the County, City of Bellingham, and small cities.

I met on April 1<sup>st</sup> with Mayor Lund, staff, and members of the Appointment Committee to review the slate of recommendations. Mayor Lund and I reviewed each of the recommendations, discussed merits with the committee members, and strongly recommend the full slate as presented to us by the Appointment Committee.

Following County Council confirmation, the slate of members will head to the Bellingham City Council for confirmation.

WHATCOM COUNTY  
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108  
Bellingham, WA 98225



**Satpal Singh Sidhu**  
County Executive

Concurrent with the seating of the Commission, Chuckanut Health Foundation will be working with the Appointment Committee to facilitate a hiring process for a WREC Executive Director. We expect the job description and application process to be released in mid April.

I want to express my deep appreciation to all of the applicants for the WREC, the Appointment Committee, Shu-Ling Zhao and Heather Flaherty from Chuckanut Health Foundation, and all the stakeholders involved in the development of the Commission since 2020. It is a great honor to be a part of this process, and I am thrilled to launch into the next phase of this important work.

Please contact Kayla Schott-Bresler in my office at x5220 with any questions.

Enclosed:

- Appointment Packet
  - WREC Seating Process Information
  - Recommended slate of appointees
  - List of all applicants to the Commission
  - Appointee applications
- Current list of Representative and Liaison members