

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

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



## **Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**Monday, January 29, 2024  
10 AM**

**Civic Center Building Conference Room / Hybrid Meeting**

**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**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**Call To Order**

Health Board Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

**Absent:** 1 - Ben Elenbaas

**Roll call of PHAB members**

The following Public Health Advisory Board members were present:

- Teri Bryant
- Sterling Chick
- Madison Emry
- Joni Hensley
- Chris Kobdich
- Michael Massanari
- Guy Occhiogrosso
- Emily O'Connor
- Adrienne Renz
- Julie Terry
- Shu-Ling Zhao

**Announcements****Meeting Materials**

[AB2024-008](#) Meeting Materials for Health Board January 29, 2024

**This agenda item was RECEIVED.**

**Public comment**

The following people spoke:

- Barry Wenger
- Misty Flowers
- Natalie Chavez

Hearing no one else, Buchanan closed the public comment period.

**Health Officer/Health Director update**

Amy Harley, Co-Health Officer, reported on the respiratory virus season and stated emergency room visits due to infection of influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are still above the threshold and COVID-19 is hovering just under the threshold for what they call widespread community transmission. She also spoke about a story by King 5 News reporting that overdose numbers in Whatcom County are higher than that in King County and stated there may be some inaccuracies in how they reported or in how they interpreted information on our county's dashboard.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, referred to the department report (on file in the meeting materials) and spoke about issues encountered from the recent cold weather snap that impacted Health and Community Services staff. She noted that 60 to 70 percent of staff worked outside of regular hours and she thanked them.

Harley and Lautenbach answered questions about immunization rates, scheduling an after-action report on the severe weather to the Council in the coming weeks, what the long-term plans are for severe weather shelters after the lease runs out for the State Street facility, whether we have the resources to keep the staff for the shelter, scheduling a Council or Health Board discussion about facilities, staff, and resources for next winter, and whether there is anything the Health and Community Services Department would need from the Council if there was another cold snap to be able to stand the shelter up again. Lautenbach stated there is also a broader conversation to be had about responsibilities and roles within county government in general, and whether or not one department should be managing this entire emergency response on behalf of the County.

### **Public Health Framework and Local Practice Alignment**

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, read from the "Health Board Discussion Form" starting on page 9 of the meeting materials (on file) on how the Health and Community Services Department is working to align with national public health frameworks.

Donovan pointed out that the presentation did not seem to point to the Health Department being the sole lead on emergency response and severe weather shelters.

Lautenbach answered which division in Health and Community Services is taking the lead on the department's strategic priority of "Community Partnerships & Engagement" (from page 18 of the meeting materials), and stated it is the work of every division. She answered what the relationship is

between the onsite sewage supervisor and team and the Planning and Development Services Department, and stated they have a staff member with expertise embedded in the Planning Department. She answered what the proposed new Environmental Public Health supervisor would do, and stated they intend on splitting the Food and Living Environment program into two programs.

Emily O'Connor spoke about there not being numbers in the presentation that help break things down so they are measurable and identify things that are quantifiable, such as gaps where they need to invest more resources.

### **PHAB Role, Subgroups, Plan for Year**

Sterling Chick and Erika Lautenbach presented (on file, starting on page 19) on the Hub and Spoke Model, the flow chart between relevant bodies, the driving state laws behind these changes, and the 2024 sub-groups the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) is forming to become compliant with state law.

Chick spoke about the duties given to the PHAB per state law, the role of the Health Board (supervisor and enactor) and the PHAB (reviewer and organizer), and how the PHAB can fulfill its role of organizer by being the hub in the hub and spoke model.

Hensley asked what the difference is between the at-large PHAB positions and PHAB members who are part of the "spoke" advisory groups. She also asked what the expectations are of at-large members such as herself.

Lautenbach stated all members were at-large before the hub and spoke model. Their goal is to ultimately not have at-large members, but to have a true hub and spoke. These new members were appointed by the Council but if they have an interest in joining another advisory board that does not have a representative to fill that spoke role, that would be fantastic. The PHAB will eventually phase out of having so many at-large members.

Julie Terry asked what kind of role they see the Peace Health representative filling and she and Lautenbach discussed that role.

Donovan asked where the Health Board and Council are in the PHAB models and how one group reports to the other. He asked about the workflows represented on page 23 of the meeting materials and asked if they are looking for a preferred workflow or whether these are just three different ways of working together.

Chick spoke about the interactions between the various groups.

Donovan stated the Council does not always hear directly from the advisory boards and Chick stated that an evolving role of the PHAB is to get information from the advisory boards to the Health Board and Council more efficiently.

Lautenbach read from the “Public Health Advisory Board Sub-Group Options” starting on page 25 of the meeting materials.

### **Work Plan and HB/PHAB Coordination for 2024**

Chick spoke about how many times the PHAB meets.

Lautenbach stated the PHAB talked about the idea of having a Healthy Children’s Fund conversation with the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force in a joint meeting.

Buchanan stated he would like to hear something about the opioid crisis at every meeting and review what is going on in the community as well as the state and nation.

Hensley stated she would like to see more community partnership so that the community knows what is going on here. Buchanan spoke about the importance of communications and Chick stated the hub and spoke model could help with that.

Buchanan stated they are going to also want to keep a close eye on the status of and plans for sheltering for the next season.

Donovan asked if they could get feedback from some of those boards and commissions that are part of PHAB about what they see as resource needs for housing security.

Scanlon stated he would like to look at existing assessments and plans that look at needs in our community regarding public health and identify where gaps are.

O'Connor stated she would like to put filter on the PHAB’s time to work on actionable items and prioritization and not just status updates on the state of challenges in our community.

Scanlon stated he agrees and would like to find out where people in the community or in government feel like they are held back by policy or

budget.

Members discussed how the PHAB can interact with the other advisory groups and how they can work within the hub and spoke model, how the PHAB will collaborate with the Health Board and Health and Community Services staff, how to make sure the subgroups have the resources they need to be able to do what they are charged with doing, examples of successful collaboration with groups last year, and the hope that PHAB can take the input from the spoke groups, view them within a larger community-wide view, and then prioritize with that perspective in mind.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Barry Buchanan, Health Board Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription