

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

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



## **Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**Tuesday, March 29, 2022  
10 AM  
Virtual Meeting**

**VIRTUAL MEETING - VIEW ONLINE**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Carol Frazey  
Kaylee Galloway  
Kathy Kershner

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**Call To Order**

Health Board Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. in a virtual meeting.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

**Absent:** None

**Announcements****Public Comment**

Donovan opened the public comment period, and hearing no one, went to the next agenda item.

**Director/Health Officer Report**

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, updated the Councilmembers on the following strategic and operational work in 2022:

**Strategic**

- The COVID-19 Strategic Plan and overall department strategic plan
- The completion of the executive summary of the Community Health Improvement Plan
- A second report from the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force and a ballot measure that should be before the Council in April or May
- Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) composition changes to be discussed in today's meeting

**Operational**

- A briefing today about the co-responder or Alternative Response Team pilot program and associated funding from the State
- Implementation of the EnerGov permitting software
- Ongoing data dashboards and data modernization
- Movement of staff from State Street to Civic and Gerard likely this fall
- Way Station programmatic planning which should jump into gear in the summer and fall
- A decision to apply for the Public Health Accreditation Board re-accreditation
- Initiation of master planning for office space needs and hybrid

flexible work

She responded to a question raised by Councilmember Elenbaas at the last Council meeting about a recent Health Department Facebook post regarding men of certain ages waiting a longer period between COVID-19 shots for fear of myocarditis and pericarditis.

Greg Thompson, Co-Health Officer, gave a COVID-19 epidemiology update for the county, state and country. He addressed the safety and efficacy of the vaccinations, the benefits outweighing the risks, the risk of myocarditis in younger men from the vaccine and the virus, and a decreased risk if vaccines are spaced out further. He answered questions about the data that shows that vaccine benefits outweigh the risks for people from ages five to thirty years old, how many deaths Whatcom County has experienced in that age range, what our tracking of adverse events looks like in Whatcom County, what people can do who have experienced adverse events, what we tell people who have experienced adverse events, and how to help them.

Lautenbach answered the question about having an adverse event reporting system in the county and making sure people who experience adverse events are being taken care of.

Thompson answered how effective the vaccines have been against the Omicron variants, and how long the booster lasts.

### **New Response Systems Division**

Malora Christensen, Response Systems Manager, presented and introduced some of the division staff including:

- Tommy McCauliffe, Program Supervisor for the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program
- Adam Fryer, LEAD Intensive Case Manager
- MacKenzie Hezel, LEAD Intensive Case Manager
- Kees Alvaran, LEAD Outreach Coordinator
- Greg Smith, LEAD Intensive Case Manager
- Christina Vega, Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Intensive Case Manager with the Bellingham Fire Department
- Laura Woods, GRACE Intensive Case Manager for the Bellingham Police Department

Christensen answered how many people are represented by the percentages listed on the presentation slides.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, thanked Christensen and the new team.

Dean Wight, Health Department, presented on the Alternative Response Team (ART) and Christensen answered a question from Laura Woods about the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team and the ART program.

Lautenbach stated, because they received State funding for the pilot and hope to receive funding from the City of Bellingham, there will be a Supplemental Budget Request coming to Council soon.

### **Director/Health Officer Report Continued**

Elenbaas commented on the earlier question about doing something locally for people who feel like they have been damaged by the COVID-19 vaccine and Lautenbach asked clarifying questions.

### **PHAB and Health Board Composition**

Steve Bennett, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Chair, presented and answered whether they could lower or raise the number of elected members if they change the composition of the Health Board, as long as the number of elected and non-elected members is equal.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated he has been talking with the County's Health Department as well as the Washington State Department of Health getting some direction. They will engage the Council on how we should re-format our Health Board in the next month or so.

### **COVID Strategic Plan**

Kate Dabe, Health Department, presented on the COVID-19 Strategic Plan.

### **Other Business**

Greg Thompson, Co-Health Officer, presented information from a recent COVID-19 Vaccine Surveillance Report from the United Kingdom Health Security Agency regarding vaccine efficacy and spoke about vaccine injury reporting and compensation.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, spoke about the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) and responded to comments about the types of complaints that are reported and how complaints are processed.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Todd Donovan, Health Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription