

**Whatcom County
Council as the Health Board (Special)**

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

1 PM

Council Chambers

COUNCILMEMBERS

Rud Browne
Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas and Kathy Kershner

Absent: 1 - Rud Browne

Special Presentation

1. [AB2020-116](#) Update on novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

The following people reported to the Councilmembers and answered questions:

- John Wolpers, Health Department
- Anne Deacon, Health Department
- John Gargett, Division of Emergency Management

They reported on the following:

- The Health Department met today with representatives from the schools including K-12 and Higher Education. Schools asked about plans for school closures but this meeting was just to discuss it and not to make that decision. The Health Department will look at it situationally if they need to.
- The Health Department has created a policy group which will include Councilmember Buchanan and Health Department staff.
- There have currently been nine deaths in Washington State from the virus.
- There is currently one person under investigation (PUI) and under quarantine in Whatcom County. Test results should come in the next 24 hours. Both the Bellingham Herald and KGMI radio station have been informed.
- Several local meetings have been scheduled with stakeholder groups including one this afternoon with healthcare providers in the hospital, one on Wednesday with skilled nursing facilities, one on Thursday with childcare facilities and one on Friday with faith-based groups.
- They are working on informing people who work with vulnerable and homeless people in the community.
- Wolpers stated he has been contacted by Congressman Larsen's and

Congresswoman Delbene's offices and have kept them up to date.

- Meetings are planned with County department heads to help them be prepared with contingency plans.
- They are working on plans for how to continue business and public meetings for County Government and addressing the legality of alternative forms of public meetings. They are also working with first responders to move medic units so that no two medic units are in one building. That way if one becomes contaminated the other can still operate.
- Emergency Management is looking at next steps to support the Health Department.
- The National Guard was activated to provide support and are in the State Operations Center.
- There is now a State incident number and agencies, departments and special districts should be tracking costs against that number. All resource requests should be coordinated through the Division of Emergency Management office.

The presenters answered questions about:

- How Whatcom County is informing the people who work with the most vulnerable people in our community.
- If there are mandatory closings should the Council acting as the Health Board need to be involved with that or have to vote on that
- If the Health Department is working with the Prosecuting Attorney's Office about the legality of virtual meetings.
- How the Health Department and Emergency Management would determine who should be quarantined or whether a business should be shut down if an employee tests positive for the virus.
- How Whatcom County is being proactive to protect and create plans for first responders.
- Whether there are any mechanisms for paying for the COVID-19 tests and whether people who are being billed for the tests can be reimbursed.
- How to communicate with the public so that there is not a lack of information and how to communicate preparedness measures of the County.
- Whether the County has buildings outside of the hospital ready in case they need to separate people who are sick.
- How many beds Peace Health has and how prepared they are.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, spoke about and Councilmembers discussed that they are seeing a run on supplies in stores and the need to

inform the community to slow down; how to use radio, school and elected officials, and faith-based communities in communication efforts; a need to regulate price gouging and sales quantities; and at what point a state of emergency should be declared in the County.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription