

Whatcom County Council as the Health Board

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

VIRTUAL MEETING - VIEW ONLINE

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

10 AM

Virtual Meeting

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 10:01 a.m. in a virtual meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Rud Browne, Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Public Comment

Buchanan opened the public comment period and hearing no one, closed the public comment period.

Director and Health Officer Report

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, reported on the following:

- Continued work on child and family well-being
- Continued work on a resolution about racism and public health
- Work with Healthy Whatcom on a community health improvement process

Greg Stern, Whatcom County Health Officer, updated the Councilmembers on the following:

- Decreased case rate of COVID-19 in Whatcom County
- Improvement in the access to vaccine and a decreased rate of hospitalizations due to COVID-19 since the arrival of the vaccine
- Increased exposure to COVID-19 variants in the county

He and Lautenbach answered questions about Whatcom County's case rate compared to national trends, whether the Health Department is working with Western Washington University as they experience a surge of cases, reports of a number of immigrants coming into the United States being positive for COVID-19 and how that might affect our community, a request to open refugee centers in Whatcom County, whether there is data regarding hospitalization or death if someone acquires COVID-19 a second time or after being immunized and the maximum rate of infection in the population at a given time.

Discussion on COVID Impact Assessment

[AB2021-196](#) Discussion on COVID Impact Assessment from Public Health Advisory Board

The following people briefed the Councilmembers and answered questions:

- Sterling Chick, Public Health Advisory Board Chair
- Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director
- Astrid Newell, Health Department

They answered questions about a countywide health navigation system and what it might look like, and whether an assessment should include the “why” as well as the “what” in determining the impacts of COVID-19 particularly on childcare.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Update on State Legislative Session

[AB2021-197](#)

Update on State Legislature from the Whatcom County Health Department

The following staff briefed the Councilmembers and spoke:

- Astrid Newell, Health Department
- Anne Deacon, Health Department
- Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director

They spoke about bills that may have relevance to local public health and that fall into the following four main categories:

- Public Health System
- Public Health Funding
- Children and Families
- Health Equity

Staff answered whether the County has the ability to make changes to the Health Board structure whether House Bill (HB) 1152 (concerning the creation of comprehensive public health districts) passes or not.

Frazey moved that the Council write a letter in support of the “Fair Start for Kids Act” (SB 5237/HB 1213 expanding accessible, affordable child care and early childhood development). The motion was seconded by Donovan.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Byrd suggested that Frazey put together a letter and bring it to the Council at the next Council Meeting.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, spoke about a possible process for a letter.

Frazey withdrew her motion and stated they could work on it through email or phone.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Update on Vaccinations

[AB2021-198](#) Update on COVID-19 Vaccines from Whatcom County Health Department

Amy Hockenberry, Health Department, gave a presentation (on file) and answered whether allowing more people to set up vaccine appointments while there will be a lower vaccine allotment will cause a bottleneck and how people with mental illness will be tracked to make sure they receive their second dose of a two-dose vaccine or whether they will be given a single-dose vaccine.

This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Health Board Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription