

# **Whatcom County Council Public Works & Health Committee**

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



## **Committee Minutes - Final**

**Tuesday, June 6, 2023  
1:35 PM  
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 2:50 P.M., MAY BEGIN EARLY  
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT  
[www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Carol Frazey  
Kaylee Galloway  
Kathy Kershner

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

## **Call To Order**

Committee Chair Kathy Kershner called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

## **Roll Call**

**Present:** 3 - Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Ben Elenbaas

## **Announcements**

### **Special Presentation**

1. [AB2023-346](#) Update from the Health and Community Services Department - opioid epidemic  
Greg Thompson, Co-Health Officer, read from a presentation (on file) summarizing the opioid crisis and answered whether treatment is more challenging with this third (Fentanyl[s]) wave of the opioid overdose death crisis than it was with the two previous waves (prescription opioids and heroin), and whether we have hope in terms of getting people into treatment programs that work the same way that some of the ones in the past might have. He stated we do have hope but Fentanyl is more difficult to treat. He spoke about the Swinomish Tribe's didgwálic Wellness Center that serves as a model for how opioid treatment can be done.

Elenbaas stated this goes beyond just being an addiction problem. He asked whether education is the best bet with this issue and whether the schools might go back to a program like Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE).

Galloway stated she hopes this will be the first of more discussions and presentations on this issue. She stated she is struggling to reconcile what feels like a public tug of war where you have two schools of thought. One is to approach this crisis through a public health lens and the other is through a criminal legal lens. She wonders if we can plan to further this conversation and think about what public health interventions we can do at the county level.

Thompson spoke about upcoming meetings and events at which the topic will be further discussed.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, stated they can focus the special Health Board meeting next month on talking about the outcomes and solutions that come from the All Hands community

discussion on June 27 and 28 and ways in which the Council can use their policy levels and potentially other resources to do something here and now.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

2. [AB2023-369](#) Presentation from the Administration and Finance Division of Whatcom County Health and Community Services

The following people read from a presentation (on file):

- Kathleen Roy, Health and Community Services
- Lorri Vining, Health and Community Services

Roy gave a general overview of the division, and spoke about their role in managing the department's budget, and their role of financial services.

Donovan asked whether the actual expenditures came in lower than what was budgeted in 2021 and 2022, and asked where that money is going. Roy stated it is typical to have a lapse from budgeted to actual amounts. Often that will be a savings in a particular fund and it remains in the fund and is then re-applied and available in future years.

Vining presented on the daily operations work of her team, including external customer service for vital records, permitting, and complaints.

Roy presented on the division's focus for this year, including COVID-19 pandemic recovery, growth of the department, and the beginning of the new biennium and newly funded projects.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, spoke about the budget lapse and stated it not only speaks to the department's ability to leverage outside funds and return some general funds back to the County at the end of the year, but it also speaks to our providers' ability to continue to provide service during the pandemic and to spend down the contracts that we had in place with them.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

### **Committee Discussion**

1. [AB2023-353](#) Discussion relating to an ordinance adopting amendments to the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2023-2028

Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services Department, briefed the Councilmembers. He stated the County identified park and government facility projects it wants to start and/or complete in 2023 and 2024, so in order to use Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) dollars these projects have to

be in the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program. The related Ordinance is scheduled for introduction tonight as **AB2023-354**.

He and Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, answered whether District four will ever get any parks or County trails, whether State and Federal lands with trails are counted in our inventory, why they are not included when we talk about level of service, and whether park land counts open space or re-conveyance land.

Elenbaas stated Whatcom County has a lot more acreage of parks than any other county so he feels we are doing a good job with level of service and is not a fan of investing more dollars into this type of thing. He is, however, a fan of putting bathrooms at Birch Bay Park.

Donovan asked how they get something in the queue about improving the senior center facility at Halleck Street in Bellingham, whether they say in the plan where the money will be coming from, and what building the \$68,969,100 for "General Government Buildings and Sites" (Exhibit A, page F-24) is for or whether it is for a bunch of projects lumped together. Aamot stated the projects are listed on the previous page.

Councilmembers, Aamot, and Knox discussed how the Council might get updates to a senior center on the list and whether that would be a capital or maintenance project.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, spoke about the Bellingham Senior Center and stated the County owns the building and the City owns the land (he first said it the other way around but this was later clarified by Knox). The County was waiting for the City to step up and say they are ready to do an upgrade or "re-do" of that facility and convert it to something more like a community center than just a senior center. It is not on our list until the City decides they are ready to do something on it.

Frazeley asked about Exhibit A, page F-7 (talking about future needs for trails and proposed improvement projects) and whether we are we looking for trail connectivity as we go forward. Knox stated that is a big goal.

Elenbaas stated he likes to keep in mind that trail connectivity involves people's private property.

**Galloway moved** to recommend the related Ordinance for introduction tonight.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 3 - Frazey, Galloway, and Kershner

**Nay:** 0

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.**

Motion approved to recommend the ordinance for introduction tonight.

2. [AB2023-350](#) Discussion of a resolution granting a Quitclaim Right of Way Deed to the City of Lynden

Andrew Hester, Public Works Department, gave the Councilmembers a background on this item. He answered whether the County would still be party to a suit if somebody sued over an accident in that intersection because it is our land. Hester stated once we do the quitclaim we would no longer be the owner of the right-of-way.

Elenbaas asked whether they will be able to fit the round-a-bout in that triangle or whether it will involve other land that is not already County-owned land.

Steve Banham, City of Lynden, stated they do have the right-of-way that they need and will just need some construction easements on the East side.

***Galloway moved*** to recommend the related Ordinance (already on the Council agenda as **AB2023-349**) for introduction tonight.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 3 - Galloway, Frazey, and Kershner

**Nay:** 0

**This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.**

Motion approved to recommend the ordinance for introduction tonight.

### **Items Added by Revision**

There were no agenda items added by revision.

### **Other Business**

Doug Ranney, Public Works Department, gave an overview of the detour due to the Mt. Baker Highway closure. He stated they did not expect the level of negative impacts that they experienced yesterday, however, since then, it seems a lot of the traveling public has found alternate routes. As of

this morning, there was minimal delay. The Washington Department of Transportation inspection crew that was out there traveled the entire detour route through all of the intersections between 6:30 and 9:30 a.m. and did not notice a substantial increase in travel time or delays at these intersections. The City of Bellingham, which operates our signals for us, adjusted the length of the green light signal east/west on Smith at the Hannegan intersection. They also changed the timing of the Bakerview signal, which they said has helped. The State has clarified some confusion on some of the detour signs and has moved some of them to make them clearer. Then the Sheriff was out there all day yesterday and has been assigned to the route (Deputy Brown) and had some really good suggestions for some additional signage that may reduce some confusion and increase efficiency of the detour. He has heard that there will be some public comment this evening and his plan will be to listen to all of those comments and create a package that addresses the major concerns and then get that back to the Council. He will work with the State on these few simple signage revisions and take into account any good public input that we get back tonight.

Elenbaas stated one issue that we have as a county in general is the ability to reach the affected individuals. Information about the public hearing was not shared on the Public Works social media page and he thinks that would be a good idea. He also thinks it would be fair if Public Works was not just directing complaints to the Council (as read on their social media page) since the Council is acting on the recommendations from Public Works.

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, stated she was hearing his feedback and taking notes.

Kershner stated she seconds Elenbaas' concern about how to get the word out to the public. Maybe we need to think about better ways to get the messages out there such as the media or a County Council social media site.

The detour due to the Mt. Baker Highway closure was discussed.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

**Kathy Kershner-via email 7/18/2023**

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Kathy Kershner, Committee Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE