

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, July 25, 2023
3:15 PM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M., MAY BEGIN EARLY
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

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

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2023-434](#) Resolution for Whatcom County Code language revisions to address equity, diversity, and inclusion

Frazey briefed the Councilmembers on the proposed resolution and thanked Council intern Sophia Rey for her work on it.

Galloway moved and Buchanan seconded that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

Elenbaas stated he is not sure he considers the corrections he is reading to be offensive, and the corrected versions sound more correct to him.

Kershner spoke about working in the field of developmental disabilities for the last 30 years and stated she has been trained to use people-first language in that modality so it comes very natural to her to use it. The gender-neutral is taking some getting used to, but she is getting used to that as well since she is writing all her reports with gender-neutral. She is supportive of this Resolution.

Donovan spoke about examples where positions in the code are defined as “him” and stated these are great changes to make. He asked whether there was also a Charter amendment proposed to do the same thing with the Charter but Kershner stated the proposal was about changing signage.

Galloway's motion that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, Galloway, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2023-477](#) Discussion with Council on 2024 legislative priorities
Kayla Schott-Bresler, Strategic Initiatives Special Programs Manager, briefed the Councilmembers on the memo (on file) with an initial list of

priorities and budget requests, and answered questions.

Buchanan asked about what kind of inpatient beds they are referring to where it says, "Justice Project plan priorities - re-entry center; inpatient beds" under Capital in the list of budget requests.

Donovan asked what the "technical fix" is as mentioned in the statement, "Economic Development Investment Program 'technical fix' bill - clarification to allow use of EDI funds for workforce housing and land banking" under Affordable Housing in the list of policy issues, and what it can be used for. He also spoke about the policy issue of "Increasing appropriate development - Limited areas of more intense rural development (LMIRDs) and ADUs in rural areas" under Land Use, and stated he hopes something comes out of the upcoming discussion (in two weeks) about housing strategies with the Planning and Development Services Department about specific asks that relate to LMIRDs and what they can do with the code or what they can fix in State law to expand opportunities for housing in the unincorporated areas where that is appropriate.

Buchanan asked whether we have any synergy around things like 90-day Medicaid waivers or other jurisdictions that are trying to move that forward as well that we can team up with, and Schott-Bresler stated Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) is working closely with the healthcare authority, and the legislature on the 90-day Waiver. She stated they have also heard that Skagit and King Counties are very interested so they will be coordinating with them throughout the session.

Frazeley asked whether "Supporting efforts to bolster the behavioral health workforce" under Behavioral Health in the list of policy issues could focus on case managers and wrap-around services for Juvenile Court. She also asked about having a State subscription service for non-prescriptive birth control that would be available to anyone like the free subscriptions for Narcan and COVID-19 tests.

Donovan asked about the coordination with other agencies and jurisdictions on the legislative priorities and whether they are looking for priorities from the Council that will perfectly mesh with those coordinating partners. Schott-Bresler stated there is room for some county-specific priorities with those general priorities and they expect the Council and Executive to put forward a list of specific Whatcom County organizational priorities to go along with those and the capital requests, as has been the case in the past several years.

Buchanan asked about a speech by the President of the United States today about cracking down on insurance companies for lack of coverage for behavioral health, and asked what the implications might be for wages or our workforce. Schott-Bresler stated they would try to get some more information about that.

Galloway thanked Schott-Bresler and the Executive's Office for putting together this engagement plan and stated she would like to see climate on the list of policy priorities (which would include forestry, salmon recovery, culvert removal, and clean building and renewable energy). She stated she also hopes broadband is a shared priority. She asked if we could align our timeline with that of our affiliates and the various associations, and also add engagement with our advisory boards and commissions.

Donovan asked about the paragraph titled, "Setting an Agenda" and asked whether the funding for public defense is referring to positions we are funding right now with short-term dollars or whether it is something different, and Schott-Bresler stated it is different and has to do with WSAC's advocacy effort with the State to properly fund indigent defense.

Elenbaas spoke about seeking places where we can allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), looking at our Critical Areas ordinance and our definition of wetlands to advocate for a sound approach for no net loss, and the County and State recognizing the importance of securing water to use for everyone involved or we will not have a viable agricultural economy and will lose what we have claimed we are here to protect.

Donovan asked about a request we made to have the State help people who are going through adjudication with filing assistance.

Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services, stated a portion of the approved operating budget was for the ability to reach out to landowners for technical assistance. He stated water solutions is definitely on the list and they are going to continue to move that forward. They can follow up to provide some specific dollar amounts that are in the operating budget for 2024 and 2025.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on August 8, 2023.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE