



Memorandum

TO: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
FROM: Erika Lautenbach, Director
RE: Health Officer Selection Process
DATE: JANUARY 2, 2025

■ Background

Following the departure of Dr. Greg Thompson as Co-Health Officer in June of 2024, Health and Community Services facilitated a recruitment process for a new co-health officer, in order to provide a formal recommendation to the Executive for appointment and Council confirmation

Dr. Amy Harley currently serves as the other Co-Health Officer. While this position requires Executive appointment and Council confirmation, the Health Officer reports directly to the Health and Community Services Director, not the Executive.

In addition to Whatcom County's need for a Health Officer, San Juan County has expressed an interest in a shared service model for a portion of one or both of our Co-Health Officers to fill their gap of nearly one year without a Health Officer. San Juan County elected leadership and Health and Community Services Director were involved in the screening and interview process as well.

■ Recruitment

Human Resources and Health and Community Services distributed the job posting widely and nationwide through traditional (Indeed, county website) and targeted (medical associations, public health associations, statewide health officers, local medical and health contacts, etc.) means.

■ Interview and Selection Process

Because this is unique role in its duties and requirements, we received a low number of applicants, as expected based on historical recruitments locally and statewide. From August 26 – October 23, seven applicants applied for the position. Of those candidates:

- 1 candidate withdrew from consideration shortly after applying
- 1 candidate not selected to interview





Dr. Harley conducted phone screen interviews of 5 applicants covering experience, role clarification and expectations, preferred issue area foci based on needs in community, and an opportunity to ask questions. Following the phone screens:

- 1 candidate was removed from consideration due to desire for very part-time (1 day/week) and remote only work

Erika Lautenbach (Health and Community Services Director), Shamika Brooks (Communicable Disease Manager and ARNP) and Dr. Harley conducted formal interviews via Zoom with the remaining four candidates. Questions, notes and scores were sent to HR following the interviews. Of the four candidates:

- 1 candidate was unable to start until June 2025 and while they expressed some flexibility in the date, they were not interested enough to explore the option once Dr. Harley followed up
- 1 candidate not selected to move forward
- 2 candidates were moved forward

Candidates not selected to move forward were contacted by Dr. Harley.

The HCS Management Team and the San Juan County Health and Community Services Director conducted in-person interviews of the two final candidates

- Both candidates were deemed qualified, however, Management Team and San Juan County Health and Community Services Director provided a unanimous endorsement of one candidate based on range of experience with many of the department roles and as a good cultural fit for the organization.

HCS Leadership briefing Executive's office on the meeting and selection of one candidate. Candidate not selected to move forward was called by Erika Lautenbach, and Dr. Harley followed up.

▪ **External Involvement**

HCS Leadership provided an update via email on the process to stakeholders including the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) and the Health Board. Both bodies were requested to select a representative to join the final interview and informal session with the final candidate(s). Expectations for the meeting and the final candidate's CV and cover letter were sent to the interview panel via email five days before the interview. Members of the interview panel were:

- Dr. Christine Espina, Vice-Chair of the PHAB; volunteered to join the meeting and attended in person.
- Councilmember Elenbaas; volunteered at the December 3 Council meeting and attended the meeting remotely on behalf of the Health Board.
- Kayla Schott-Bresler was unable to attend from the Executive's Office and Aly Pennucci joined remotely.





Consensus was achieved to move the final candidate forward to Executive Sidhu for formal confirmation to the County Council.

Concurrently, the San Juan County Health and Community Services Director received approval from his elected leadership to move forward with the shared services model with the two Co-Health Officers (one current, one candidate) and will develop a separate contract for services rendered.

Executive Sidhu and Deputy Executive Schott-Bresler will meet for a final interview with the proposed candidate and Dr. Harley.

PHAB is expected to meet on January 9th and provide input on the final candidate for recommendation to the Executive/Health Board/Council. The Executive would then present the candidate for confirmation on January 14, 2025.

Please contact Dr. Harley or me if you have any questions.



