

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

**VIRTUAL MEETING - VIEW ONLINE (BUDGET WORK SESSION);
AGENDA REVISED 11.10.2020**

Thursday, November 12, 2020

9:30 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 9:32 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

Discussion and Possible Action

1. [AB2020-484](#) Discussion of the County Executive's recommended 2021-2022 Biennium Budget

Approximate Timestamp: 00:01:04

Buchanan moved to amend the 2021-2022 budget (General Fund) to include \$85,000 per year in 2021 and 2022 to support Northwest Youth Services Ground Floor Program. The motion was seconded by Browne.

The following staff discussed the motion with Councilmembers:

- Anne Deacon, Health Department
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office

Deacon briefed the Councilmembers and answered questions about the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), how much of it must be dedicated to youth, how it needs to be used, the flow of progress that people make through the housing continuum from subsidized housing to independent housing, whether that mobility is more difficult for youth, whether there is data on the movement through the continuum, and whether the 22 North (Opportunity Council) and the Ground Floor (Northwest Youth Services) programs could work together.

Schroeder and the Councilmembers discussed how the motions made today will impact the General Fund, how to calculate the reserve balance, what the lowest level of reserves would be for the year, and how to calculate that.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Browne, Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Elenbaas

Approximate Timestamp: 00:34:18

Donovan moved to retain in the Sheriff's budget the mental health deputy position that was scheduled to be reassigned to patrol duties and to keep that position as was defined in the Additional Services Requests (ASR) that were approved in the previous budget cycle. The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Kershner suggested a friendly amendment to include all three patrol deputies that were taken out of the Sheriff's budget as well as the five correctional officers. **Donovan did not accept** the friendly amendment.

Councilmembers and the following staff discussed the motion:

- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Bill Elfo, Sheriff

They discussed how Donovan's motion is revenue neutral, asking the Sheriff to find cuts somewhere else, and what funding is necessary for the position.

Byrd suggested a friendly amendment to cut the County's Community Outreach Facilitator position to fund the mental health deputy position. **Donovan did not accept** the friendly amendment.

Councilmembers discussed how the position should be funded and leaving it to the Sheriff's Office to find where cuts would need to be made to fund this position.

Elfo requested that the appropriate funding be provided for this position.

Browne suggested a friendly amendment to provide for the position but to provide for the funding as well.

Donovan accepted the friendly amendment and **amended his motion** to retain in the Sheriff's budget the mental health deputy position that was scheduled to be reassigned to patrol duties and to keep that position as was defined in the Additional Services Requests (ASR) that were approved in the previous budget cycle *and add General Fund revenues to maintain the position.*

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Buchanan, Donovan, Frazey, Kershner, and Browne

Nay: 1 - Byrd

Out of the meeting: 1 - Elenbaas

Approximate Timestamp: 00:45:38

Kershner moved to amend the budget to include the two additional patrol deputies that were cut from the Sheriff's budget. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

The following people discussed the motion with Councilmembers:

- Bill Elfo, Sheriff
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Jon Hutchings, Public Works Department Director
- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

They discussed when the second deputy started in Point Roberts, the number of weekly deputy calls there, what the County's arrangement is for mutual aid with U.S. Customs, what the second deputy position is and what that person does, the response time for backup in Point Roberts if needed and whether the U.S. Border Patrol can act as backup if needed, whether funds could be used from the Point Roberts Transportation District traffic improvement fund or the County Road Fund, which position (between the deputy in Point Roberts and the property crimes deputy) is more critical to public safety in Whatcom County, how much of Road Fund money is spent in Point Roberts each year, ways to free up funds to pay for the property crimes deputy position, and whether retired deputies could be utilized.

Councilmembers and the speakers also discussed the corrections deputies positions. Schroeder stated that all the positions that are frozen in the County have position control so that when budget revenues increase, the Administration can come back to Council to unfreeze a position. The plan is to keep them in the budget but to not give them budget authority until the Administration has a better idea of the revenues for the next two years. The positions will be prioritized in conversation with Council on a quarterly basis as they see what revenues are doing.

Sidhu suggested that the Council approve the property crimes deputy now and the Administration will try to work through the one in Point Roberts and bring it back to the Council.

Kershner did not amend her motion.

Kershner repeated her motion to reinstate, with funding, the Point Roberts patrol deputy and the property crimes patrol deputy into the 2021-2022

biennial budget.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Kershner moved to table this discussion until they have the discussion on potential cuts from the budget. The motion was seconded by Browne.

The motion to table Kershner's motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Byrd, Donovan, Frazey, Kershner, Browne, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

Out of the meeting: 1 - Elenbaas

Approximate Timestamp: 00:52:34

Kershner moved to request that the Administration fund one of the County's two (the What-Comm 911 Center and the Prospect Fire Dispatch Center) call centers and de-fund the other. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

Councilmembers discussed the motion and the following people also spoke:

- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Bill Elfo, Sheriff

Browne suggested an alternative motion and ***moved*** to allocate a certain amount of money to get a truly independent assessment of our 9-1-1 facilities and the need to have two of them.

Councilmembers concurred that a motion is on the floor so this is not an appropriate motion at this time so ***Browne withdrew*** his motion.

Kershner repeated her motion to request the Administration to cut the funding for the second call center.

Councilmembers discussed which call center Kershner's motion is referring to, the history of work done by the WHAT-COMM/Prospect Communications (911) Administrative Board and its movement toward closing one center down and combining them, a review done by an independent third-party agency that looked at different scenarios and different jurisdictions from a perspective of operational efficiency, having a tri-county call center, the operational costs of the two call centers, how much of that cost is contributed by the City of Bellingham and from the

County's General Fund, pursuing policy decisions on this issue separate from the budget process, and which positions should be eliminated if they were to go forward with the motion.

Kershner suggested a possible alternate motion to allow the funding for 2021 and that the beginning of the plan that had been started last year be moved forward in 2021 with the expectation that in 2022 we would be looking at a combination of the What-Comm and Prospect call centers. She did not formally amend her original motion.

Councilmembers and the speakers continued to discuss the motion, whether this meeting is the place to make a decision like this, whether the advisory board has reengaged with this idea, whether combining would save money, support for moving forward with pursuing a consolidation process, and whether the County pays for the calls that come into the call center for the fire district.

Kershner withdrew her motion. Byrd agreed to that as the seconder of the motion but stated that he would like to consider a different motion on the issue.

Approximate Timestamp: 02:06:55

Browne moved to move forward with a process of consolidation of the centers understanding that it will require public testimony and input from the players.

Browne restated his motion and moved to start the process of consolidation. Having said that we understand that we will take testimony from everyone and make sure this makes sense. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

Kershner asked if there should be a timeline included in the motion and Councilmembers discussed the question and the motion.

Browne amended his motion and moved to move forward with a consolidation, take public testimony, hear the pros and cons, and make a decision by March 31, 2021.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Frazey suggested a friendly amendment to say we will consider looking into consolidating the two centers.

Buchanan suggested a friendly amendment that we will strongly recommend a consolidation process.

Councilmembers discussed the wording of the motion.

Browne amended his motion and moved that the Council strongly recommends consolidation of Whatcom County's two 9-1-1 call centers and will make a final decision after hearing from all of the participants and the public by March 31, 2021. The motion was accepted by Byrd as the seconder of the original motion.

The amended motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Elenbaas, Kershner, Browne, Buchanan, and Byrd

Nay: 2 - Donovan and Frazey

Clerk's note: Councilmembers took a break then reconvened at 1 p.m.

Approximate Timestamp: 02:06:14

Frazey moved to approve \$25,000 each year for a total of \$50,000 in the biennial budget for the Whatcom Conservation District Wildfire Risk Reduction Program in Whatcom County. The motion was seconded by Donovan.

Donovan suggested a friendly amendment that the allocation come from Non-Departmental rather than coming out of the Council budget.

Frazey accepted the friendly amendment and moved to approve \$25,000 each year for a total of \$50,000 in the biennial budget for the Whatcom Conservation District Wildfire Risk Reduction Program in Whatcom County and that the allocation come from Non-Departmental rather than coming out of the Council budget.

Councilmembers discussed the motion with the following people:

- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Elenbaas, Frazey, Kershner, Browne, Buchanan, and Donovan

Nay: 1 - Byrd

Approximate Timestamp: 02:24:09

Byrd spoke about whether there is a way to reduce the number of printers

being used by the County or reduce what is being spent for paper-related supplies and asked how they might go about doing that.

Councilmembers discussed the suggestion with the following people:

- Brad Bennett, Administrative Services Department
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office

Bennett answered whether it would be in the budget lapse, and stated that many of the machines are currently being used for scanning.

Schroeder stated there is not an action item in the budget for this but they will look at it moving forward.

Approximate Timestamp: 02:27:42

Kershner moved to eliminate the Community Outreach Facilitator position from the Executive's budget. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, discussed the motion with Councilmembers, spoke about the work being done by the Executive's Office and the Community Outreach Facilitator, and answered questions about the position.

The motion failed by following vote:

Aye: 2 - Kershner and Byrd

Nay: 3 - Frazey, Browne, and Buchanan

Out of the meeting: 2 - Donovan and Elenbaas

Approximate Timestamp: 02:57:25

The following people discussed with Councilmembers a suggestion by Byrd to investigate potential savings by doing a motor pool instead of purchasing vehicles like the County does today:

- Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, suggested that an agenda item could be scheduled for Committee of the Whole
- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, stated he will reach out to the Public Works Department Director

Approximate Timestamp: 03:03:00

Kershner brought forward her earlier motion and ***moved*** to reinstate, with funding, the Point Roberts patrol deputy and the property crimes patrol

deputy into the 2021-2022 biennial budget. Byrd had previously seconded the motion.

Councilmembers discussed the motion with the following people:

- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Bill Elfo, Sheriff
- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed whether this would be acceptable for the General Fund over the course of two years, whether these two positions are currently frozen, whether these two positions would be the first to come back when there is available funding, whether they are going from two deputies in Point Roberts to one, what will happen to employees currently serving in those positions, approving just one position for now and allowing the Administration to work with the Sheriff's Office to look at bringing back the second after the first quarter of the year, and what the Point Roberts deputy does in different scenarios that may happen in Point Roberts.

Frazey suggested a friendly amendment to split the motion into two and to consider the two positions separately.

Kershner accepted the friendly amendment to split the motion **and withdrew** her motion.

Kershner moved to reinstate the Point Roberts Sheriff's deputy position. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered how this might affect the updated budget.

Browne suggested a friendly amendment to vote on allowing the Sheriff to fund an additional position of the Sheriff's choice and to then vote on allowing the Sheriff to fund a third position of the Sheriff's choice.

Kershner did not accept Browne's friendly amendment.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered whether savings in 2022 from combining the two 9-1-1 centers would be \$114,000.

Sidhu asked for clarification on Browne's friendly amendment and Councilmembers and the speakers discussed the motion.

The motion to reinstate the Point Roberts Sheriff's deputy position carried by following vote:

Aye: 4 - Kershner, Browne, Buchanan, and Elenbaas

Nay: 2 - Byrd and Frazey

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Donovan

Kershner moved to include the property crimes detective/deputy back into the Sheriff's budget with funding. The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

The motion by following vote:

Aye: 5 - Browne, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Frazey, and Kershner

Nay: 1 - Byrd

Out of the Meeting: 1 -Donovan

Approximate Timestamp: 03:28:38

Councilmembers discussed the Council's Legislative Analyst position with the following people:

- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Clerk's note: This item was discussed again and a motion made after AB2020-490.

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

2. [AB2020-490](#) Ordinance authorizing the 2021 Whatcom County Unified Fee Schedule

The following people discussed the Ordinance with Councilmembers:

- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Kathleen Roy, Health Department
- Wendy Jones, Sheriff's Office

They discussed what fees the Administration decided to raise and why, why the fees for inspection of food establishments by the Health Department are being raised, and the Non-resident School Release (line 7195 on page nine of Appendix A) and whether it reflects changes made the last time the Unified Fee Schedule was adopted.

Clerk's note: Councilmembers returned to this item after another motion was made under AB2020-484. See minutes below.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

- 1. [AB2020-484](#) Discussion of the County Executive’s recommended 2021-2022 Biennium Budget
Buchanan moved to add \$6,000 in 2021 to the Council budget for redistricting. The motion was seconded by Donovan.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, briefed the Councilmembers on how the money would be used.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

- 2. [AB2020-490](#) Ordinance authorizing the 2021 Whatcom County Unified Fee Schedule
Councilmembers and Schroeder discussed bringing forward a substitute version to the Council of AB2020-490 to reflect the discussed changes.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription