

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COVID-19 INTERIM
ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN TO RESPOND TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WITHIN
WHATCOM COUNTY CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(EMERGENCY ORDINANCE)

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant hardship to our local economy which in turn has led to substantial unemployment, and

WHEREAS, in previous localized emergencies Whatcom County has been able to rely upon the financial resources of the State and Federal governments to recover, however as COVID-19 is a global problem future State and Federal government funding is uncertain as it is being stretched to the limit, and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County agencies and departments have done an excellent job at reducing the rate of new infections from COVID-19, managing the increased demand for social services, procuring supplies of essential Personal Protective Equipment, and will continue to have to devote considerable resources to these needs for the foreseeable future, and

WHEREAS, additional resources now need to be identified and dedicated to the challenge of leading the community onwards to economic recovery, and

WHEREAS, the County, the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham have an established Regional Economic Partnership (REP) agreement where the Port serves as the state-designated Associate Development Organization (ADO) responsible for promoting and encouraging economic growth within Whatcom County, and

WHEREAS, the purpose and goals of the REP and ADO include:

- To retain and attract livable wage jobs and to assist businesses, entrepreneurs, and other local organizations to thrive,
- To partner to create a thriving community for all,
- To provide expertise in financing, planning, and technology to help start, develop, or grow business,
- Promote Whatcom County as a great place to live, work and do business.
- Connect businesses with economic development services and skilled workforce resources,
- To help enhance and grow cross border trade opportunities with Canada,
- Work collaboratively with our local and regional partners to create a vibrant community of higher education learning, prosperous agricultural lands, high tech businesses, marine manufacturing, and local food processing.

1 **WHEREAS**, local government officials, businesses, non-profits and the community
2 need an COVID-19 interim economic recovery plan to be developed and available as
3 rapidly as possible. With the understanding it will be replaced by a long-term,
4 detailed strategy once State and Federal recovery funding has been defined and
5 secured, and
6

7 **WHEREAS**, while the County does not have any significant untapped local financial
8 resources, the county is blessed with considerable human capital and economic
9 acumen within our community which can be drawn on to assist the ADO in the
10 immediate development of a COVID-19 Interim Economic Recovery Plan (CIERP).
11

12 **FINDINGS SUPPORTING EMERGENCY:**

- 13
- 14 a) The County Executive has issued a Proclamation of Emergency to combat the
15 spread of the COVID-19 virus; and
- 16
- 17 b) The spread of the virus presents a continuing threat to the health and safety
18 of the citizens of Whatcom County; and
- 19
- 20 c) The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant harm to our local economy
21 which in turn has led to substantial unemployment within Whatcom County.
22
- 23 d) The County needs to immediately seek ways to provide employers with the
24 confidence they need to reopen their businesses and reemploy the workforce.
25

26 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED**, that as a condition of, and subject to, the ADO
27 accepting the \$50,000 funding proposed by separate emergency ordinance:
28

- 29 1. The ADO shall be appointed as the primary lead agency responsible for the research
30 and development of a COVID-19 Interim Economic Recovery Plan as outlined in
31 Exhibit A, and
- 32
- 33 2. As time is of the essence, the ADO shall immediately form a panel of experts drawn
34 from the local community to augment and complement the existing ADO staff, and
35
- 36 3. The ADO shall assume county-wide responsibility for messaging and communications
37 to the press and community for all things related to the CIERP and economic
38 recovery, and
39
- 40 4. The ADO shall report any new information which could have a moderate or material
41 impact on the county's economic recovery to Incident Command, the County Council,
42 County Executive, Port of Bellingham, the Mayors, Tribal Chairs and Health
43 Department within 24 hours of receipt, and
44
- 45 5. The ADO shall provide updates, at least weekly, to the community on the status of
46 economic recovery efforts. The reports will be factual, and strive to contain the right
47 balance of hard truth and optimism, and
48
- 49

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, by the Whatcom County Council acting
2 as the Whatcom County Health Board, that the Whatcom County Health Department shall
3 have the following responsibilities:
4

- 5 1. The Health Department shall add the strategies outlined in Exhibit B to its existing
6 plans in support of the County's economic recovery, and
7
- 8 2. The Health Department shall support the efforts of the ADO to produce the CIERP as
9 rapidly as practical, and
10
- 11 3. The Health Department shall maintain responsibility for messaging and
12 communications, through the Incident Command Joint Information Center, to the
13 press and community related to the health and social service aspects related to the
14 COVID-19 crisis, and
15
- 16 4. The Health Department shall report any new information which could have a
17 moderate or material impact on the county's economic recovery to Incident
18 Command, the County Council, County Executive, Port of Bellingham, the Mayors,
19 Tribal Chairs and ADO within 24 hours of receipt, and
20
- 21 5. The Health Department shall provide updates to the ADO, at least weekly, on the
22 status of the Health Departments contributions to the economic recovery efforts, to
23 be included in ADO's weekly reports to the community, and
24

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, to help reduce the future costs to the
26 County of responding to COVID-19, strategies 2(a) and 2(b) in Exhibit B shall be added to
27 Incident Command's existing plans.
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29
30

31 **ADOPTED** this ____ day of _____, 2020.
32

33
34 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

35
36
37 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

38
39
40
41 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

42
43
44
45 Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive

() Approved () Denied

Date Signed: _____
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51

EXHIBIT A

ADO Deliverables

The goal will be to use a panel of experts recruited by the ADO to develop a comprehensive picture of the County’s economic recovery needs and a plan to address them.

To provide recommendations to policy makers in our cities and county as to what actions our community can take, consistent with the Governor’s orders, which will have the greatest positive impact, with the least amount of resources in the shortest amount of time.

The recommendations from the ADO and its Expert Panel will be advisory only and it will be up to policy makers to decide what action to take.

The deliverables will include, but not limited to:

- 1. **Immediate response** - the ADO shall work with the Health Department and the member organizations of Team Whatcom to develop and promote through action and example a program along the theme of “Whatcom Cares for Your Safety”. The purpose is to improve consumer confidence by rapidly positioning our community as regional leaders/active partners in disease transmission prevention and safe social activities.
- 2. **Impact analysis** (within 30 days) - Through extensive outreach establish and quantify the sectors of the economy affected:
 - a. Businesses expected to see a return of demand and thus recover in due course e.g. Auto repairs?
 - b. Businesses likely to recover with limited assistance e.g. breweries and specialty manufacturing?
 - c. Sectors likely to find recovery challenging e.g. restaurants, retail, donor funded non-profits and higher education?

As some impact analysis has been done, the focus may be more on ensuring we have identified all key sectors and the critical inter-relationships between them.

- 3. **Local actions available** – Local government finances are also under considerable stress and can’t be relied upon to provide funds to improve the business climate. Therefore, the focus on locally sourced assistance should be in the form of human capital drawn from within our community. Some examples of how this could be used may be:
 - a. Mentorship matching
 - b. Business management education
 - c. Cash flow management
 - d. Encourage local collaboration
 - e. Promotion of “buy local” policies
 - f. Resource sharing
 - g. Resiliency training
 - h. Local medical supply manufacturing and reuse technologies

1 The Expert Panel
2

3 It is proposed that this group comprise of 9-13 volunteers. Ideally, at least half of the group
4 will be individuals who have previously successfully led their respective organizations
5 through one or more significant economic downturns, ideally as CEOs/CFOs. The panel will
6 be augmented by senior managers, a representative from the EOC with a business
7 background, and employees of the Port of Bellingham acting under state statute in its role
8 as the County's Associate Development Office.
9

10 This group will be augmented with representatives from different sectors who will be sought
11 out to contribute to their respective industries. If practical the team will collaborate and
12 leverage resources with similar groups in Skagit, San Juan and maybe Island Counties to
13 build a more regional response.
14

15 Commitment & Governance guidelines
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- 17 • Meetings will be held in compliance with the requirements of chapter 42.30 RCW, the
18 Open Public Meetings Act. It is suggested the initial meeting be two hours long and
19 additional meetings will be 1 hour. It is suggested that meetings will initially be held
20 three times per week at times that do not conflict with other regularly scheduled
21 COVID-19 such as 11am, 1pm or 4pm Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. The
22 frequency will change over time as the group sees fit
23
- 24 • Members of the group will be expected to participate in a least two out of every three
25 meetings
26
- 27 • Members may be added or removed by a 2/3rds majority vote
28
- 29 • A chair and vice chair shall be appointed at the first meeting
30
- 31 • Meetings shall be governed by Roberts Rules as necessary.
32
- 33 • If decisions are not unanimous minority reports can be included upon request
34

35 Additional principals
36

37 Recognizing that uncertainty causes businesses to conserve cash, and delay rehiring, while
38 certainty and optimism bring business investment and job growth, the team will seek ways
39 to increase local employers' confidence in the future.
40

41 Recognizing that every adversity in life provides opportunity, the team shall look for ways
42 this disaster can be leveraged to make our economy and community stronger and more
43 resilient in the future.
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1 **EXHIBIT B**

2 Health Department deliverables

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4 The Health Department’s critical role in helping our economy recover shall grow to include:

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6 Disease prevention education and enforcement as businesses reopen, and
7
8 Establishing and promoting best practices to reduce the County government’s
9 contribution to the cost of providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to third parties

10
11 1. **Whatcom Cares for Your Safety** - the Health Department shall immediately work
12 with the ADO, and the member organizations of Team Whatcom to develop and
13 promote through action and example, a program along the theme of, "*Whatcom*
14 *Cares for Your Safety*". The purpose is to improve consumer confidence by rapidly
15 positioning our community as regional leaders/active partners in disease
16 transmission prevention and safe social activities. The Health Department shall:

- 17
18 a. Support the ADO in the effort to position Whatcom County as a community
19 that cares for the safety of its residents and visitors, to be seen as a safer
20 place to visit, stay, and eat out than many other areas.
- 21
22 b. Support the ADO in providing local businesses with the tools to remind
23 residents and tourists that Whatcom’s abundant outdoor recreation
24 opportunities are an inherently safer "post-COVID" social activity than say
25 sitting in a crowded stadium or theme park.
- 26
27 c. Support the ADO in helping local residents and businesses feel confident
28 remaining and spending their money within Whatcom is as safe, if not safer,
29 than going to other places where the disease prevention policies may be
30 viewed as weaker.
- 31
32 d. Develop, or contract with an existing supplier of training tools, to provide a
33 COVID-19 safety training and certification program for individuals similar in
34 concept to the WA State’s Food Worker Card.
- 35
36 e. Conduct inspections, award "COVID-19 Safety Inspection Ratings" and publish
37 the results online, similar to what Health Departments in other jurisdictions
38 have been issuing to restaurants for years, and are posted with pride on
39 storefront windows (a mock up is provided for example purposes as Exhibit
40 C).
- 41
42 f. Carry out periodic audits and enforcement of these safety rules.

43
44 As the above tasks will require additional resources beyond what the Health Department has
45 available, the Department is encouraged to utilize furloughed local government workers and
46 volunteers as much as practical.

1 2. **Reducing the County's contribution to future PPE costs** – recognizing WA State
2 and Whatcom County have already spent considerable amounts of money to acquire
3 and distribute PPE to assist health care organizations to respond to the COVID-19
4 crisis, and that this rate of expenditure cannot be maintained, the Health
5 Department shall support Incident Command in enacting the policies which:
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- 7 a. Ensure organizations requesting additional supplies of PPE only draw upon
8 Incident Command's limited inventory for as long as they continue to have no
9 other viable options, this shall include written statement substantially similar
10 to:
11

12 *"By ordering Personal Protective Equipment and/or other supplies*
13 *through Whatcom Incident Command you agree to reimburse*
14 *Whatcom County for any portion of our actual cost which is not*
15 *reimbursed by FEMA or others. Furthermore, you understand Whatcom*
16 *County may not know the cost of the supplies at the time you order*
17 *them, and the actual cost incurred by Whatcom County to acquire the*
18 *items you are requesting may prove to be considerably higher than the*
19 *price you normally pay your commercial suppliers."*
20

- 21
22 b. Follow the example set by the State government, PeaceHealth and other
23 parties' to develop strategies to reuse N95 masks, and looking for other ways
24 to apply this approach to all PPE where practical. Including but not limited to
25 face shields, gowns, Tyvek clothing, single use stethoscopes etc. This process
26 will include establishing a means to collect, sterilize, verify, repack and
27 redistribute. To ensure an adequate supply of dirty items are received for
28 cleaning there should be a policy of exchanging like for like in the same
29 quantities, less an appropriate allowance for those too damaged or soiled to
30 be reused.
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EXHIBIT C

(This is provided for illustrative purposes only; the final design may be considerably different)

We Care for Your Safety



This business has received an

A+

Safety evaluation from Whatcom County
COVID-19 safe workplaces team

