



TO: Members of Whatcom County Council
FROM: Barry Buchanan, Kaylee Galloway, County Executive Satpal Sidhu,
& Chuckanut Health Foundation
DATE: September 14th, 2022
SUBJECT: Establishing a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

Requested Action

The action requested is for Council to consider the community member recommendations and introduce the Ordinance and corresponding Exhibit A establishing a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission to begin the next phase of public inquiry and process with constituents before voting on the Ordinance.

Background

In partnership with the Chuckanut Health Foundation, the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County have been funding, supporting, and participating in a community-led process to develop recommendations for a countywide racial equity commission. Since being selected through an RFP process, the Foundation has acted as the bridge between community and government stakeholders.

In June of 2021, Chuckanut Health Foundation convened a group of 35 community Stakeholders to anchor the process of creating the recommendations. Over the course of 12 months, this group was provided with resources and facilitation to draft an establishing ordinance; guidelines to be incorporated into a commission's rules of procedure; a framework for appointing members; and a design for staffing as well as a funding model.

From the culmination of the regular stakeholder meeting in June 2022 through August, the draft ordinance underwent rigorous review by County Attorneys Christopher Quinn and Karen Frakes in addition to Bellingham City Attorney Alan Mariner to ensure the document moving forward was well-vetted and legally sound. Through out this review and revision process, six Stakeholders from the original continued as a collaborative work group incorporating feedback while maintaining the integrity and accountability to the community members who had engaged in the process.

Pertinent Documents

In the Council packet are the findings from a comprehensive, community-led process to developed recommendations for the formation of a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission including the full report on a county-wide qualitative study; additional research and information to provide context for decision-making; and an establishing Ordinance and corresponding Exhibit A that was co-created with community stakeholders as well as supporting process materials.