

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**

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 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED**, that as a condition of, and subject to, the ADO
13 accepting the \$50,000 funding proposed by separate ordinance:
14

- 15 1. The ADO shall be appointed as the primary lead agency responsible for the research
16 and development of an COVID-19 Interim Economic Recovery Plan as outlined in
17 Exhibit A, and
18
- 19 2. As time is of the essence the ADO shall immediately form a panel of experts drawn
20 from the local community to augment and complement the existing ADO staff, and
21
- 22 3. The ADO shall assume county-wide responsibility for messaging and communications
23 to the press and community for all things related to the CIERP and economic
24 recovery, and
25
- 26 4. The ADO shall report any new information which could have a moderate or material
27 impact on the county's economic recovery to Incident Command, the County Council,
28 County Executive, Port of Bellingham, the Mayors, Tribal Chairs and Health
29 Department within 24 hours of receipt, and
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- 31 5. The ADO shall provide updates, at least weekly, to the community on the status of
32 economic recovery efforts. The reports will be factual, and strive to contain the right
33 balance of hard truth and optimism, and
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35 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, by the Whatcom County Council acting
36 as the Whatcom County Health Board that the Whatcom County Health Department shall
37 have the following responsibilities:
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- 39 1. The Health Department shall add the strategies outlined in Exhibit B to its existing
40 plans in support of the County's economic recovery, and
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- 42 2. The Health Department shall support the efforts of the ADO to produce the CIERP as
43 rapidly as practical, and
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- 45 3. The Health Department shall maintain responsibility for messaging and
46 communications, through the Incident Command Joint Information Center, to the
47 press and community related to the health and social service aspects related to the
48 COVID-19 crisis, and
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- 1 4. The Health Department shall report any new information which could have a
- 2 moderate or material impact on the county's economic recovery to Incident
- 3 Command, the County Council, County Executive, Port of Bellingham, the Mayors,
- 4 Tribal Chairs and ADO within 24 hours of receipt, and
- 5
- 6 5. The Health Department shall provide updates to the ADO, at least weekly, on the
- 7 status of the Health Departments contributions to the economic recovery efforts, to
- 8 be included in ADO's weekly reports to the community, and
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10 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, to help reduce the future costs to the
 11 County of responding to COVID-19 strategies 2(a) and 2(b) in Exhibit B shall be added to
 12 Incident Command's existing plans, and

13
 14
 15 **ADOPTED** this ____ day of _____, 2020.

16 17 18 ATTEST:	WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON
19 20 21 _____ Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council	_____ Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

22 23 24 25 APPROVED AS TO FORM:	WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON
26 27 _____ Civil Deputy Prosecutor	_____ Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive

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31 () Approved () Denied
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33 Date Signed: _____
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1 **EXHIBIT A**

2 ADO Deliverables

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

6
7 To provide recommendations to policy makers in our cities and county as to what actions
8 our community can take, consistent with the Governors orders, which will have the greatest
9 positive impact, with the least amount of resources in the shortest amount of time.

10
11 The recommendations from the ADO and its Expert Panel will be advisory only and it will be
12 up to policy makers to decide what action to take.

13
14 The deliverables will include, but not limited to:

- 15
16 1. **Immediate response** - the ADO shall work with the Health Department and the
17 member organizations of Team Whatcom to develop and promote through action and
18 example a program along the theme of “Whatcom Cares for Your Safety”. The
19 purpose is to improve consumer confidence by rapidly positioning our community as
20 regional leaders/active partners in disease transmission prevention and safe social
21 activities.
- 22
23 2. **Impact analysis** (within 30 days) - Through extensive outreach establish and
24 quantify the sectors of the economy affected:
 - 25 a. Businesses expected to see a return of demand and thus recover in due
26 course e.g. Auto repairs?
 - 27 b. Businesses likely to recover with limited assistance e.g. breweries and
28 specialty manufacturing?
 - 29 c. Sectors likely to find recovery challenging e.g. restaurants, retail, donor
30 funded non-profits and higher education?

31
32 As some impact analysis has been done, the focus may be more on ensuring we
33 have identified all key sectors and the critical inter-relationships between them.

- 34
35 3. **Local actions available** – Local government finances are also under considerable
36 stress and can’t be relied upon to provide funds to improve the business climate.
37 Therefore, the focus on locally sourced assistance should be in the form of human
38 capital drawn from within our community. Some examples of how this could be used
39 may be:
 - 40 a. Mentorship matching
 - 41 b. Business management education
 - 42 c. Cash flow management
 - 43 d. Encourage local collaboration
 - 44 e. Promotion of “buy local” policies
 - 45 f. Resource sharing
 - 46 g. Resiliency training
 - 47 h. Local medical supply manufacturing and reuse technologies

1 The Expert Panel
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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.
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15 Commitment & Governance guidelines
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- 17 • Meetings will be held online in compliance with the requirements of chapter 42.30
18 RCW, the Open Public Meetings Act. It is suggested the initial meeting be two hours
19 long and additional meetings will be 1 hour. It is suggested that meetings will initially
20 be held three times per week at times that do not conflict with other regularly
21 scheduled COVID-19 such as 11am, 1pm or 4pm Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays.
22 The 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
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- 31 • Meetings shall be governed by Roberts Rules as necessary
32
- 33 • If decisions are not unanimous minority reports can be included upon request
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35 Additional principals
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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.
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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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EXHIBIT B

Health Department deliverables

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

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

1. **Whatcom Cares for Your Safety** - the Health Department shall immediately work with the ADO, 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. The Health Department shall:

- a. To support the ADO in the effort to position Whatcom County as a community that cares for the safety of its residents and visitors, to be seen as a safer place to visit, stay, and eat out than many other areas.
- b. Support the ADO in providing local businesses with the tools to remind residents and tourists that Whatcom’s abundant outdoor recreation opportunities are an inherently safer “post-COVID” social activity than say sitting in a crowded stadium or theme park.
- c. Support the ADO in helping local residents and businesses feel confident remaining and spending their money within Whatcom is as safe, if not safer, than going to other places where the disease prevention policies may be viewed as weaker.
- d. Develop, or contract with an existing supplier of training tools, to provide a COVID-19 safety training and certification program for individuals similar in concept to the WA State’s Food Worker Card.
- e. Conduct inspections, award “COVID-19 Safety Inspection Ratings” and publish the results online, similar to what Health Departments in other jurisdictions have been issuing to restaurants for years, and are posted with pride on storefront windows (a mock up is provided for example purposes as Exhibit C).
- f. Carry out periodic audits and enforcement of these safety rules.
- g. As the above tasks will require additional resources beyond what the Health Department has available, the Department is encouraged to utilize furloughed local government workers and 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:
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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."*
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- 21 b. Follow the example set by the State government, PeaceHealth and other
22 parties' to develop strategies to reuse N95 masks, and looking for other ways
23 to apply this approach to all PPE where practical. Including but not limited to
24 face shields, gowns, Tyvek clothing, single use stethoscopes etc. This process
25 will include establishing a means to collect, sterilize, verify, repack and
26 redistribute. To ensure an adequate supply of dirty items are received for
27 cleaning there should be a policy of exchanging like for like in the same
28 quantities, less an appropriate allowance for those too damaged or soiled to
29 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

