
DRAFT MINUTES – JUNE 23 SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

1. [AB2020-234](#) Discussion regarding goals, guidelines, and approach to updating current and future budgets

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, stated that one response came in from councilmembers on this item.

Buchanan spoke about a grant from the MacArthur Foundation and a conference he attended concerning the reduction of incarceration with regard to mental health and racial disparity. An idea for using the grant money is enhancing the Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) and the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programs. He stated he would like to see that as a budget priority.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered a concern about giving specific and tangible information that the Administration can use to develop the budget and communicate to the department heads. The budget priority meeting has been re-scheduled for July 8, 2020 so they can incorporate councilmember goals into the document.

Councilmembers discussed whether the LEAD and GRACE programs have the ability to function in an advisory role to the Council and whether they should put together a committee that could function as an advisory role to the Council concerning race relations in Whatcom County.

They discussed the following possible budget priorities:

- Reducing redundancies in Whatcom County government by putting the Parks Department under the Public Works Department
- Focusing on values that the Council has influence over
- Investing in upstream prevention and interventions in lieu of costly remediation strategies
- Funding the homeless outreach team
- Consolidating County building work space by allowing family friendly work-from-home policies if employees choose and if they are able to complete their job responsibilities
- Keeping the current COVID-19 jail booking procedures

Byrd led a discussion about budget priorities and goals using the document, Frazey's Additions to Byrd's Priorities (on file).

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Councilmembers discussed establishing two budgets reflecting a 10 percent and 20 percent decrease from 2019 revenue, whether they should request that the Administration produce two different budgets, waiting first to hear what the Executive's Office proposes, requesting that the Administration just prepare a budget with a 20 percent decrease from the 2019 revenue, whether the Council should direct the Executive's Office on a specific percentage and what that should be.

Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office, answered questions about whether they are going to get new revenue forecasts or sales tax projections, what percentage of the budget the Administration is thinking of cutting, and what percentage of the County's revenue comes from sales tax. He stated the Administration will put together a 2021-2022 budget based on an amended 2020 budget which will be based on projections on sales and property tax revenues. They will present a balanced budget based on projections with a game plan for accomplishing reductions if the revenues don't turn out to be as forecasted.

Councilmembers continued to discuss the item.

Brad Bennett, Administrative Services Department, spoke about the percentage of the decrease and stated that sales and property tax reduction was less than they thought but they will need to look at why. Money that is discretionary is limited but they will come up with some realistic and conservative revenue estimates and then try and manage a budget within that. Then they will identify where they would have to cut, but reductions across the board do not always work.

Byrd suggested a motion to establish a single budget reflecting a 20 percent decrease from 2019 revenue.

Councilmembers discussed establishing a budget without a fixed amount of decrease but with a contingency if there is a 20 percent decrease in revenue, requesting the Executive to prepare a budget with a supplemental reflecting what would be done differently or what would have to change in the budget if revenues drop by 20 percent, not creating more work for the departments by asking them to work on a scenario that may not come into fruition, and leaving it up to the Executive's Office and Finance to propose a budget.

Schroeder stated in the past the Administration has prepared negative additional service requests which would show where in the organization you can accomplish reductions. A valuable conversation in the next couple

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months with Council will be prioritizing where in the organization those program reductions would have to happen.

Browne moved to request the Executive to prepare a budget with a supplemental reflecting what would be done if revenue decreases by 20 percent. The motion was seconded by Byrd.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 1 - Donovan

Councilmembers discussed the following goal as presented on the screen by Byrd:

Achieve a balanced and affordable housing market, with Monthly Sales Inventory (MSI) between five and seven months and vacancy rate between five to seven percent by end of 2023.

Browne suggested alternative language for the goal: Focus on identifying and removing barriers to affordable housing.

Byrd stated they could change the year from 2023 to 2025.

Byrd moved to approve the goal: Achieve a balanced and affordable housing market, with MSI between five and seven months and vacancy rate between five to seven percent by the end of 2025. The motion was seconded by Frazey.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Donovan out of the meeting

Councilmembers discussed the remaining proposed goals:

Kershner moved to approve the goal: Increase the number of students ready to enter kindergarten by 50 percent by the end of 2022 (increase from current rate of 47 percent for Whatcom County to 70 percent). The motion was seconded by Byrd.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 1 - Donovan

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Browne moved to approve the goal: Invest in upstream prevention and interventions in lieu of costly remediation strategies including incarceration and racial disparity. The motion was seconded by Kershner.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Kershner moved to approve the goal: Achieve county-wide unemployment rate of five percent or less by end of 2022.

Byrd suggested a friendly amendment to make the year 2025. Kershner accepted the friendly amendment and the motion was seconded by Byrd.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Donovan suggested a friendly amendment to change the rate of unemployment to two percent. The friendly amendment was not accepted.

Councilmembers continued to discuss the goal.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 1 - Donovan