

# **Whatcom County Council as the Health Board**

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



## **Minutes - Final**

**Tuesday, January 31, 2023**

**10 AM**

**Council Chambers / Hybrid Meeting**

HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON AT 311 GRAND AVENUE SUITE  
101, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT  
[www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR CALL 360.778.5010)

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Carol Frazey  
Kaylee Galloway  
Kathy Kershner

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**Call To Order**

Health Board Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

**Absent:** 1 - Ben Elenbaas

**Announcements****Public Comment**

The following people spoke:

- Natalie Chavez
- Misty Flowers
- Name not stated
- Heather K
- Susan (last name not stated)
- Leah Wainman

Hearing no one else, Buchanan closed the Public Comment.

**Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Update**

Steve Bennett, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB), updated the Councilmembers about current work groups within the PHAB and transparency in the PHAB membership process. He stated he spoke to the Health Board at the beginning of last year about figuring out how they were going to implement the new legislation from the State and that one of the options that was presented was a hub and spoke model. He talked to the boards and commissions and invited the entire group to decide who they wanted to put forward or if there were any individuals who were interested. That was then printed and presented to the Health Board. He stated he is open to partnering with the Health Board and open to feedback about the PHAB's processes and conversation about their processes. He just wants to make it clear that they are a very diverse group.

Kershner stated she expressed some concerns about the hub and spoke model in an email and stated it was not something she was necessarily in favor of, simply because we are trying to expand community participation across the board and by back-filling our PHAB with people that were already serving on different boards, we are limiting that access to our

community members. Her suggestion was to invite members of other boards and advisory groups to the PHAB on the occasion when those inputs would be sought. She is not a hub and spoke model supporter.

Bennett stated he was not sure he received that email. Some members on the PHAB are not on another board or commission. One of the PHAB's goals in bringing in members of other commissions and boards was not just that the commission and board is now a part of PHAB, but that we have an inherent person on the PHAB that has knowledge of the history of policies and procedures that that board has been responding to, so it is about depth of knowledge on a variety of issues.

Kershner stated that for two and a half years they have heard every two weeks from a segment in our community that has a differing opinion on how the pandemic was handled and how we are continuing to handle it. She asked how are you planning to incorporate those voices into our PHAB if we do not allow a member from that group to join and express their views and the part of the solutions that we have going forward.

Bennett stated there is diversity of thought and opinion on the PHAB and the diversity of opinion on one issue such as the pandemic is not the whole of the PHAB's job. They have to work with and engage with a variety of health issues. They are starting with the community engagement process and they have various at-large members.

Kershner stated she wanted to remind him that the Council does make the appointments.

Byrd stated if the PHAB was shopping this idea around for 8-12 months then he would have expected that everything would be ready and prepared with the people they wanted for the appointment. He feels the letter sent by the PHAB to the Council asking them to hold off on the appointment was about having people not appointed that someone did not want appointed. Every one of the applicants had experience that would lend itself to this group. How we work through national emergencies such as COVID-19, how we communicate with people across the spectrum and across ideals, how we work together on issues like this, and how we leverage transparency and information through situations such as this should be number one on our list of topics and having a variety of opinions around that should be something that is important. He struggles to understand why they would not have a plan for incorporating that other than public comment. In listening to Bennett's comments today, it strikes him that there is an opinion that somehow the PHAB is separate in what it does and as if the Council and Health Board is

secondary or advisory to the PHAB. He wants to make clear that the PHAB exists to advise the Health Board.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, stated do not chastise volunteers in open public comment.

Frazeley asked if they could go back to the agenda and that maybe they need to set a different time for discussion.

Donovan stated the Council had a vote on these positions and we are still here talking. It is not just disrespecting this, it is disrespecting the Council.

*Clerk's note:* Donovan left the meeting.

Buchanan moved forward to the next agenda item.

### **Strategic Plan – Health Board Involvement**

Frazeley asked that everyone take a second to breathe and then start again. We are all here to help the community.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, read from the agenda packet and updated the Councilmembers on the Strategic Plan and opportunities for them to work together. She answered whether the national accreditation with the National Public Health Accreditation Board lasts for five years.

### **Department Reorganization and New Name**

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, reported and stated the Health Department is changing its name to Whatcom County Health and Community Services. She answered whether Council needs to do a code change for the new name, whether the overall goal is supporting people or whether it is getting people to heal and uplift, and whether the mission includes not only meeting people where they are but also allowing them to stay where they are. She stated that wherever possible they hope to work upstream and think about what systems need to change to get people on a good path as opposed to catching people when systems have failed them. They want to change policies and systems to prevent disease and injury.

### **Healthy Children's Fund**

Kate Dabe, Health Department, briefed the Councilmembers on the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan and next steps. This included:

- The amount and purpose of the fund
- Who is writing the plan

- The progress of the plan draft since November
- Which groups submitted feedback on the draft
- How they are incorporating that feedback
- When the plan will be submitted to and considered by the Council

**Meeting Review and Proposed Agenda for Next Meeting**

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, stated this section is for any reflections about the meeting and stated the next meeting in May will include the topic of aging in Whatcom County. There is time if there are other topics of interest.

Galloway stated she would like to discuss housing and homelessness in a health context and how the Health Board and/or Council can support the Health Department in their work in this area.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on February 21, 2023.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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Barry Buchanan, Health Board Chair

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Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

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