

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

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



## **Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**Tuesday, May 2, 2023**

**10 AM**

**Council Chambers / Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, 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 10:02 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

**Roll Call of the Health Board**

**Present:** 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

**Announcements****Public Comment**

The following person spoke:

- Natalie Chavez

Hearing no one else, Buchanan closed the Public Comment period.

**Health Officer/Health Director Updates**

Greg Thompson, Co-Health Officer, stated they have been seeing an uptick in the effects of the opioid crisis and specifically the fentanyl crisis in Whatcom County. He stated that Whatcom Health and Community Services Department and a number of partner organizations are in the planning stages for a meeting on June 27 and 28, 2023 in partnership with the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute from the University of Washington. There will be local content presented during the afternoons of both days that focuses on the nature of the opioid crisis and fentanyl, some interventions that are happening and needed in our community, and planning what we can do to go forward.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, updated the Health Board on new Health and Community Services Department staff including:

- Shamika Brooks, who replaced Cindy Hollinsworth (who retired) as the Communicable Disease and Epidemiology Manager
- Heather McGuinness, Partnerships and Strategy Supervisor for the new Community and Organizational Development Division
- Lynnette Bennett, Manager for the new Community and Organizational Development Division

She spoke about the June 27 and 28 meeting mentioned earlier, and stated that starting today, the Health and Community Services Department will be

developing the framework for an incident command structure for opioid and specifically fentanyl and they will be standing that up shortly. They have been in conversation with the Executive and the Mayor of Bellingham and expect to receive a request from them about standing up a multi-agency coordination group which will help us align our efforts to be more efficient in the support of those individuals and agencies that are involved with fentanyl.

### **Aging and Older Adults in Whatcom County**

The following people presented (presentation attached to Meeting Details):

- Heather Flaherty, Aging Well Whatcom - Chuckanut Health Foundation
- Lara Welker, Aging Well Whatcom - Chuckanut Health Foundation
- Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging
- Bethany Chamberlin, Northwest Regional Council

Flaherty introduced the presentation.

Welker presented on a data overview of older adults in Whatcom County, where they live throughout the county, older adult population change in the last three years compared to the overall population, projected older adult populations in Whatcom County through 2040, Whatcom County race and ethnicity population estimates in 2020, the percent of older adults living alone, the number of seniors accounted for in point and time counts from 2012-2022, the Aging Well Whatcom Blueprint 2022 update (attached to the Meeting Details) and its focus areas, the development of the Blueprint from 2018-2019, and the community engagement for the Blueprint Update in 2021-2022 and key learning from that.

Orr presented on the Whatcom Council on Aging's mission, programs, work with partners for resource fairs, top challenges, and the organization's opportunities, including the pursuit of a central kitchen for senior meals and continued investment in county senior center facilities and staffing to support the growing and diversifying senior community.

Bethany Chamberlin, presented on the Northwest Regional Council, including an overview of the organization, programs and services, the challenge of the caregiver shortage, and the opportunity for WA Cares Funding to help next generations put away money for their future care.

Flaherty invited the following other community partners to share about their organizations:

- Jennifer Lautenbach, Lynden Senior and Community Center Executive Director
- Karen Burke, YWCA Executive Director
- Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health Manager
- Dan Gray, Dementia Support Northwest Executive Director
- Josselyn Winslow, cofounder of Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) Resources Northwest and of Dementia Support Northwest

Flaherty closed the presentation and the speakers answered what the method was for the point in time count of seniors and how they went about that, questions about the WA Cares Fund and how it works, what more the Council can do for senior centers, how the county's senior centers are owned, and whether they are having capacity issues with those spaces.

Kershner thanked the speakers and stated there are so many issues with aging and she wants to echo that the WA Cares program is not enough.

Buchanan asked what the biggest challenges are around workforce and the biggest strategies around those challenges. The speakers stated they need to pay more for these positions and give them benefits, and they need intergenerational support in the community.

### **Other Business**

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, spoke about a thought or request that she heard around the beginning of this year for having joint Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) meetings every time there was a Health Board meeting so it would be a joint meeting of those two groups. She stated she got some questions about that during the scheduling of this meeting and asked whether the Council might like to discuss whether that was something they wanted to do for future meetings.

***Buchanan moved*** that they have joint Health Board / Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) meetings going forward for Health Board meetings. The motion was seconded by Galloway.

Donovan stated he knows this was a request from the PHAB but asked if it had something to do with the need to make it a larger body to fit with the State law change.

Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director, spoke about why this was requested. She stated per State change (House Bill) 1152,

Public Health Advisory Boards are now required to have a role in weighing in on policies that the Health Board considers so this would create a very streamlined process by which they could concurrently weigh in while the Health Board is considering policies. The Health Board also only meets four times a year and there are topics that are universal to both the Health Board and the PHAB. The hope was that four times a year there would be topics, universally of interest to both boards and that impact both bodies, for which they could jointly consider policies or have further conversation about.

Galloway stated there are a lot of areas of opportunity for our Health Board and PHAB to weigh in on a multitude of issues that have to do with public health so she thinks there is opportunity to grow as a body. Streamlining our processes and systems of collaboration with the PHAB will take us to a new level. She would support this motion and would even support meeting more frequently than quarterly.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** 5 - Buchanan, Donovan, Frazey, Galloway, and Kershner

**Nay:** 2 - Byrd and Elenbaas

Buchanan stated their August Health Board meeting will be a joint meeting and also subsequent meetings after that.

Motion approved that they have joint Health Board / Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) meetings going forward for Health Board meetings.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

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