

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

VIRTUAL MEETING - ENDS NO LATER THAN 3:20 P.M.

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

2 PM

Council Chambers

COUNCILMEMBERS

Rud Browne
Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. in a virtual meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Rud Browne, Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, Ben Elenbaas and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Announcement

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2020-219](#) Discussion and update on strategies and other items related to COVID-19 (Council and Health Board)

The following people updated the Councilmembers and answered questions.

Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director
Chi-Na Stoane, Public Health Advisory Board Chair
Scott McCreery, Unified Command Incident Commander

Stoane updated the Councilmembers on the work of the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) and answered questions about whether there is a report to the council regarding an action plan on the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Councilmembers, Lautenbach and Stoane discussed whether there is a strategy for getting to Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the state's phased approach to reopening; whether the Council acting as the Health Board has a work plan for the PHAB and where the board gets its direction for its next task; the role and make-up of the PHAB and whether there is a Council representative; how the County is putting their resources into getting past the COVID-19 crisis and who is developing a plan to that end; crafting a plan to coordinate the efforts of the Health Department, Health Board and PHAB; finding ways to live with the virus as opposed to being free of it; the success of established efforts such as the "Safer. Stronger. Together." campaign and what became of that campaign; how to get back to normalcy and to encourage the community to do their part by distancing and wearing masks; what other countries that are faring better than the United States are doing differently; and communicating more information about the context of cases that Whatcom County is dealing with (from parties, or in certain types of business, etc.) as opposed to general case numbers.

Lautenbach updated the Councilmembers on the following:

- A social marketing campaign initiated by the Health Department and the Whatcom Unified Executive Board geared toward people ages 16 -21 years old in order to understand behaviors and craft messages to them to effect behavior change
- Evolving progress of the “Safer. Stronger. Together.” campaign
- A series of forums put on by the Health Department, the Regional Economic Partnership, and the Whatcom Business Alliance for businesses covering topics such as how to talk to employees about masks, what to do when an employee is sick, and how to support the mental health of employees during this time
- A new Deputy Health Officer in the Health Department
- Two community health workers on loan from Unity Care
- The recent drive-up testing pilot and statistics on who came to be tested

McCreery spoke about the requirements of staffing the testing site, the costs, and the efficiency of the effort. They established that this type of testing is not sustainable for our community.

Lautenbach spoke about the plan for testing moving forward and answered questions about whether there is a contract for the social marketing campaign and what the cost will be for that, whether insurance can be billed for people being tested, how many tests they will be able to do going forward, collaborating with Skagit County, an estimate of cost for the Test Directly mobile testing system, whether there will be access for people to schedule a test if they do not have a phone, whether other pharmacies will do testing like Rite Aid in Lynden, if there is data available for whether cases have been related to large numbers of people gathering at places like the beach, the plan for school openings, and whether businesses have been fined as a result of the Governor's three strike rule.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

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

Councilmembers and Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, discussed what they should do next with this discussion, scheduling a special meeting, and what should be discussed at that meeting.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, spoke about the process between now and mid-September and getting a draft budget along with Additional Service Requests (ASRs) and negative ASRs to the Council as soon as possible.

Councilmembers continued to discuss how to go forward with the guiding principles to decide what they will and will not fund. They concurred to schedule a special meeting on July 28, 2020 to discuss this item.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on August 5, 2020.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE