

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

VIRTUAL MEETING - VIEW ONLINE

Monday, November 16, 2020

2 PM

Virtual Meeting

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

Special Presentation and Possible Action

[AB2020-549](#) Update on Council's request to have the County purchase pallet shelters

The following people discussed the item with Councilmembers:

- Tyler Schroeder, Executive's Office
- Anne Deacon, Health Department
- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Karen Frakes, Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Hannah Stone, Bellingham City Council

Schroeder briefed the Councilmembers and referred to an email sent to Council with additional information.

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed whether this item should be discussed by the Homeless Strategies Workgroup, whether the purchase meets the guidelines for using CARES Act dollars and how the timing of a purchase might affect that, other shelter efforts through the City of Bellingham and the Health Department, whether buying pallet shelters would need a competitive bid process or whether the emergency proclamation still in place could waive that requirement, where the shelters could be located and how they would be operated, partnering with the City of Bellingham, what CARES Act funds or other funding sources (such as a Department of Commerce or other State grants) are available, overall management costs, whether homelessness is an allowable use for CARES Act dollars, whether capital equipment purchased for utilization during the CARES Act period could be used for a different purpose afterward, whether the pallet shelters could be used for additional isolation and quarantine facilities or so that the homeless population would be less likely to get COVID-19, whether base camp is beyond capacity and beds at the Byron Street facility are currently available, when the Byron Street rooms will be available for shelter, an increase this year of available shelter beds from last year, and using the pallet shelters as supportable infrastructure that could be

used somewhere other than in the city of Bellingham.

Karen Frakes, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, stated the concern is whether there is any assurance or plan that the County would be able to use these at some point. The language from the Treasury indicated that you have to be able to show that you need to receive them during the covered period and unless we can show a plan that they need to be received now she is questioning if it meets that criteria.

Councilmembers and the speakers continued to discuss funding for operational expense, the location for the shelters, taking the proposal up with the Homeless Strategies Workgroup with the Administration in attendance, establishing a process for such a purchase, and what will happen to the shelters after March.

Byrd moved to reach out to make the purchase of these units. The motion was seconded by Kershner.

Byrd stated if we do it now we can move it forward under CARES Act funding and if it does not work under that, we can fall back to the Department of Commerce or other funding.

Frakes stated there are also issues with competitive bidding and she has a hard time understanding how it could fall under the emergency exemption.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Hannah Stone, Bellingham City Councilmember, stated that based on City Council conversations, there is support from the City to move forward but they are waiting on the Council to take this critical step because this is the piece that they cannot provide. She urged them to support the motion.

Schroeder and Frakes answered how long the competitive bid process takes, whether the Council can operate under the emergency proclamation and bypass the purchasing policies, and the fact that purchasing has to meet certain conditions and the County does not meet those conditions at this point.

Councilmembers and Sidhu continued to discuss the motion, the use of CARES Act money or falling back on other funding sources, funding operating costs, and not cutting existing housing programs to fund this.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Browne, Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, and Kershner
Nay: 0

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription