



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: March 12, 2020 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM – Fireplace Room, Halleck St., Bellingham

WCHAC Members Present: Kyle Christensen, Samya Lutz, Emily O’Connor, Debbie Paton, Paul Schissler, Hadrian Starr, Tara Sundin, Brien Thane

WCHAC Members Absent: Teri Bryant, Karen Burke, Michael Jones, Diana Phair, Satpal Sidhu, Marc Walker

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager, Ann Beck, Human Services Supervisor; Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Human Services Housing Specialist; Chris D’Onofrio, Human Services Housing Specialist; Tammy Axlund, Office Coordinator
Guests: Ryley Sweeney, Greg Winter, Michael Parker

| Agenda Item | Discussion | Action/Who |
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| A. Call to order, introductions | Introductions commenced and quorum present. | Debbie Paton |
| B. Agenda Review | No Changes | |
| C. Public Comment | No public comment | |
| D. Reports/Discussion A. <i>WCHAC Bylaws Update</i> | <p>The draft WCHAC Bylaws in the meeting packet contain revisions resulting from changes to the Interlocal Agreement, which has now been agreed upon by all governing bodies within the County. These changes reflect the increase of scope, expanded role, changes to membership, updated references, removal of irrelevant language, and general clean up.</p> <p>There is no change to length of term for members, and those in designated positions are not subject to term limits, but to their position, and required positions can send a designated alternate if unable to attend.</p> <p>Suggested edits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add tribal member to roster under other membership positions. • To ensure the proportionality of housing needs, and so that we remember the intent of Interlocal Agreement, add this language to Committee Role after 82.14: “This committee will provide equitable distribution of funds.” | Anne D |



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| <p>B. Considerations for SHB 1406</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell out some of the main points of the Interlocal Agreement in section D. Health Department staff will make the recommended changes and send the revised version of the Bylaws to all for review. The Housing Advisory Committee will vote on the amended bylaws at the April meeting. <p>The Committee discussed the priorities for utilization of the funds we will receive each year. Initially we proposed to look at this in 5 year phases to allow for change over the 20 years which we will receive the funds. We can use this money for capital construction or rehab, affordable housing, operations of new units, and rental assistance. We will set a high level framework to start with and identify activities we need to engage in in this first phase. The County will facilitate a housing plan relative to this.</p> <p>Questions to Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much do we use to address the crisis at hand? • Are there populations we want to prioritize? • How do we work with the cities to identify capital projects? • How do we ensure we are banking funds for the future? • How do we coordinate with others? <p>Chris gave a presentation on the affordable housing continuum and provided information on least intensive to most intensive housing interventions. The purpose of the presentation is to educate policy makers and small cities who have not been intimately involved in this topic, to make sure that all stakeholders of the Interlocal Agreement understand how money can be used and what is being invested. The Housing Advisory Committee was asked to provide suggestions for improvement to the presentation, so it can be refined before it is taken to the intended audience of small cities and County Council.</p> <p>The Housing Authority is very active in both affordable housing and rapid rehousing. It is important to educate others about what rental assistance is. Vouchers are extremely important, although to a significant extent people struggle to use the vouchers in a private situation because the rents are above HUD standards</p> <p>Messaging is important as we let our leaders know there is a system in place, but there is also a huge gap. People are overspending and being over charged.</p> <p>In the slides, we need to determine if the Housing Authority should be under rapid rehousing, or permanent supportive housing. Rapid rehousing should be temporary and tenants should be able to pay more over time.</p> | <p>All</p> <p>Chris</p> |



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| | <p>Affordable rental housing costs \$300K for county, and closer to \$375K for City of Bellingham due to construction costs. Emphasize that we are building high quality, long term housing which will lead to lower maintenance and operating costs down the road. The local cost after leveraging is \$30K, but this takes 3-5 years.</p> <p>Provide capital construction cost use scenarios and make it clear that small projects are not feasible for tax credit dollars which only pays for construction, and not operations.</p> <p>There is a need to find land with economy of scale and the ability to adjust zoning to fit.</p> <p>Much of the money comes in as a loan and rent pays that loan back. If families can't pay the rent, rental assistance comes in.</p> <p><u>Small Cities perspective:</u> They want a majority of funding to go to capital projects for a more permanent solution. How much goes to rental assistance and how much to capital projects in whole county? What are we doing county wide in each of the areas? The biggest challenge in Ferndale is there is nowhere to put the rental assistance in. They don't have the space, yet they still need rental assistance to help those who still can't afford the affordable housing.</p> <p><u>Bellingham perspective:</u> Bellingham (COB) has a levy where they get \$4M/year. Their need is not as much on the capital side. Examples of each category at the COB include: Small – Hart house, Med – 22 North, Large – Aloha Explain process from building to operating.</p> <p>Capture what we are choosing between and include operating costs. An operating subsidy makes projects successful long term. Add a category to talk about operations, so it is clear what is included. This could be done through an example. We don't want to create an assumption that we give rental vouchers and then there is no more need.</p> <p>Rent assistance is a way to make capital projects possible. Develop a common shared language around rental assistance and provide examples of how that works. Request to update scenario with blended approach to combine rental assistance and capital funds.</p> <p>Some will want to dig deep in the presentation, but the Housing Advisory Committee needs to recommend what goes where. The County is willing to use EDI money, so we can get building projects in all small cities. We are not ready to decide how much goes where. The discussion today is supposed to be about education and</p> | |



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| | <p>understanding, not expectations of funding.</p> <p>The graphics in the presentation are great. Add scenarios for each category with challenges, results, and long term commitments to help everyone understand where the funds go and what each is committing to. Make it tangible for small city mayors.</p> <p>Also use percentages in years one through five for rental assistance, then show how many people we helped over time.</p> <p>Acquisition rehab is allowable to convert existing units that are new to the system and not already existing as affordable units. This can be cost effective, but these may not be able to get the tax credits.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> Brien, Samya, Chris, Greg will refine and break down the presentation, and continue to work with stakeholders to ensure a better understanding of pros and cons of all options. They will present it at the small cities caucus next week at 9 a.m. in Lynden City Hall. This same group could go to with a refined presentation on road show.</p> <p>A Discussion Framework Document for the SHB 1406 Plan was distributed. It is important that this committee and the stakeholders build flexibility into the program, so we can shift resources around. The framework of phases will support this. This document was used with a couple of cities to explain that we are not putting together a 20 year plan, but a phased plan with goals that the RCW allows and are important to stakeholders. The intent was to have a one page document to break complex information down for people and get the discussion started. Committee members asked if the points were goals, if the bullets were connected, and if they represent a linear progression. There was a suggestion to scaffold the document and add years. Not all were comfortable with the crisis management part of the top row. The small group will look at this too.</p> <p>House bill 1590 passed yesterday. Is it helpful to describe this, or does it cause confusion?</p> <p>This discussion is what was needed today: As a committee we can't get too far in front of the stakeholders.</p> | |

WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department



Greg Stern, M.D., Health Officer

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| E. ADJOURN | 9:56 am | Debbie Paton |
| <i>NEXT MEETING</i> | <p>Next regular meeting April 9th, 2020, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.</p> <p><u>NEW LOCATION</u></p> <p>WECU Education Center</p> <p>511 E Holly St</p> <p>Bellingham, Washington</p> | |