



## WHATCOM COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING NOTES

SPECIAL MEETING APRIL 23, 2020

**Present:** Steve Bennett, Barry Buchanan, Sterling Chick - Vice Chair, Barbara Juarez, Lindsey Karas, Les Seelye Chi-Na Stoane – Chair,

**Absent:** Leah Wainman

**Facilitator:** Laura Todd

| Topic   | Discussion/Outcome   |
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| <b>Call to order</b>                                | Roll call of Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Members   |
| <b>COVID-19 Task Force for Reopening Businesses</b> | <p>It will be helpful for businesses to receive technical assistance and support in order to take measures for infection control and social distancing so they can keep their employees and customers safe upon reopening.</p> <p>Erika Lautenbach, Health Department Director, introduced Steve Hollenhorst, Dean of Huxley at Western Washington University, and currently working in the strategic planning unit of the Whatcom Unified Command. Erika, Steve, and Laura Todd have been working on a structure by which the business support task force may be developed.</p> <p>Today's meeting is the opportunity to make sure the PHAB is comfortable with the direction and feels good about moving forward with this work. The vision is for the PHAB task force to partner with various sectors, and create guidelines and understanding of Health Department (WCHD) recommendations for how to do infection control work well in different settings and maintain social distancing in each sector. There will be opportunity for businesses to weigh in and discuss the regulatory and physical or staffing barriers to being able to implement the recommendations. The end goal is to have guidance for each sector, so they can reopen with confidence that they can keep customers and staff safe.</p> <p>The work today is to approve the task force.</p> <p>From the perspective of the advisory board, success would look like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A flexible plan to get our community back to work, and keep the customers, employees and community at large safe We need to honor both sides</li> <li>• The State will provide overall timeline and guidance. It is up to the local County level to get ready and make it work</li> <li>• It is really important to look at this plan as a living document, so we can adapt as the situation changes, and to communicate through this process the risk in the various sectors. We need to consider what risk perception is, and build understanding of how risk mitigation can work, but that risk mitigation isn't 100 percent.</li> <li>• Success would be limiting the loss of life and opening in a way that we do not have to step back and lock down again. It will not be survivable for some businesses to lock back down and send employees home again. We need to do this slowly with as tested and guided an approach as possible.</li> </ul> <p>Community involvement is one of the key elements of this plan. True buy-in is the only way to make this sustainable, because PHAB and the WCHD do not regulate most of these</p> |



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| <p><b>COVID-19 Task Force for Reopening Businesses</b></p> | <p>businesses. It is important that people want to do it as a way to keep trust with staff and customers.</p> <p>The challenge to keep virus transmission levels down in a way that allows us to sustain our economy during the COVID pandemic. It is going to be a long haul, and we need to problem solve for virus suppression, while trying to find that balance. Success is a compendium of solutions to these problems: Should we be able to provide technical assistance and dialog? What do businesses do to implement infection control and what are the barriers? Do we have resources and are there ways the community can help them take those measures? How do we build relationships and work together to develop a process that will minimize damage from both the virus and the economic effects of controlling it? Sustaining the process over time will be important.</p> <p>Recommendation for the next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement for moving forward today to create a task force</li> <li>• Health Director builds out a framework by the end of the week and sends to PHAB for review</li> <li>• Determine what sectors to include in task force, what sectors to engage with, and agree on number of members in each task force sector.</li> <li>• PHAB subcommittee to review applications and recommend membership for the task force, ideally by the end of next week</li> <li>• PHAB to vote on membership for the task force.</li> </ul> <p><u>Michelle DeKoekkoek, Weichert Realty</u> – Not sure what the task force is for. What if businesses put forth ideas for their business to the task force and the task force says whether or not they can open?</p> <p><i>We are not the authority to decide when businesses can open. The Governor will make that decision on or around May 4<sup>th</sup>. Our role is to partner with sectors and make recommendations to the different sectors and coming up with solutions collectively.</i></p> <p>The purpose is to listen to the sectors and collect information and ideas to then provide recommendations for businesses to tailor to their workplace to make it safe. With guidelines, businesses know what to shoot for. It will be a standard structure informed by their experience, barriers, and the unique nature of their sector.</p> <p>Sustainability is important. We need to work with businesses to define the new normal because we won't be reverting back to what we always did.</p> <p>The Health Officer noted that testing is important, but is just one part. He suggested setting up resources such as a work group or process to have dialog, offer technical assistance and problem solve together individually and onsite. It is not just applying the recommendations and regulations, but a process to look at the barriers to implementing guidance and best practices. This won't eliminate the risk, but everything we do to slow the risk means we won't have to dial up the restrictions again.</p> <p>Some businesses may be able to make it work right away, and others may have to change several things about their business to make it work. As we go forward in partnership, we will learn what that looks like. There is an opportunity to leverage community resources and community dollars to bring certain sectors up to where they can feel confident.</p> <p>There was a motion to form the task force for COVID business support. Seconded and Approved (7,0)</p> <p>Sterling, Les, Chi-Na, and Steve B. will help Erika, Laura and Steve H. to work on figuring out the sectors and creating the application</p> <p>We will set a Special PHAB meeting next Thursday or Friday to approve membership</p> |
| <p><b>Other/Public Comment</b></p>                         | <p>Public Comment: <i>Responses in italics</i></p>  |

Vince Lalonde, Owner, Mount Bakery and Temple Bar: from the restaurant perspective, he hopes the task force will not just be seen as a group wanting to get businesses open again, but will use feedback from government and testing. It's about opening and slowing down as needed in terms of the virus. There are a lot of challenges for businesses where people like getting together in crowds. Would like to see a standard, so businesses are consistent in when and how they open.

Caleb: Rather than the essential and non-essential approach it should now be the safe or not safe

Michelle DeKoekkoek, Weichert Realty: How many people do you want on this task force and do you want people from all different sectors? *This group will be as large as it needs to be to ensure good sector representation. We will know in the next week or so. Where would you get application? PHAB will e working on the application and will get it out next week. Not all will get on the task force, but all can still be involved. We do want to hear ideas from everyone.*

Jennifer Sefzik: Remember that there are trade associations that may be consulted. To whom does the task force report? *PHAB and ultimately to HB. Thank you, and then PHAB and HB make the recommendations?*

Christie: Will there be a sector for children's activities, sports, etc.? *Sectors will be decided over the course of the next week.*

Elizabeth Hampton: What skill set are we looking for? *We are looking for those with skin in the game, those with experience and knowledge of specific sectors. The sectors and the application process have not yet been decided.*

Robert Mittendorf – Bellingham Herald: Want to be clear, you voted to form a task force and are now discussing the application process? Will the meetings be open to public like this one is now? *Yes, we agreed to form the task force and next week we will be working on the details of how to structure the task force and the application process. The task force meetings will be open to the public. Since these meetings have high public interest, we will be covering this and several members of the media are here. We don't know all of you. Please have people say their name and affiliation when they speak, so we know who is talking in the recording.*

Cara Buckingham: Might be good to include businesses that have remained open through the pandemic to-date.

Lance Calloway: Will the group be considering industry organizations to be involved in the Task Force

Joyce Segal: How does testing fit into this planning? I've heard it has to be an integral part of it. *Testing is important. This is one of a number of strategies that the WCHD is employing to address COVID. One component of being able to contain and suppress transmission is to test more people, so we can find the contacts and they can be isolated and quarantined. We have gotten this far with non-pharmaceutical interventions: hand washing, physical distancing, all the way up to the business closures. We are trying to figure out how to stay at the suppression of transmission with not just testing, isolation, and quarantine. What are the things we can do more of to keep the doors open and the businesses going? The whole purpose for testing is to do isolation and quarantine. It is not a treatment. There is not a vaccine yet. We've got other measures we can use to stop the spread of the virus: behavioral changes, engineering changes, administrative changes.*

Mike Kent: In selecting or reaching out to members of the task force would it not be more efficient to reach out to association heads and have them represent subcommittees who put forth recommendations, instead of individuals. Time is of the essence. It would move faster and not bog us down as much as hearing from every individual. A lot of industries have

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|                                     | <p>already established guidelines through the Governor’s office that others may be able to duplicate. <i>Thank you for the input.</i></p> <p><u>Elizabeth Hampton</u>: share universal HR resources include: a safety and health manual (time stamped with resources) for employee education for infection prevention/new workflows with social distancing/CDC updated requirements with appropriate PPE for consumers and workers, how to address consumer and also employee fear in returning to this new normal in a smart and safe way; making it a time stamped document so we are operating on current DOH, State and industry specific buy in.</p> <p><u>Caleb</u>: Are you basically saying this task force is going to be setup to educate the public thru each sector or industry ambassador?</p> <p><u>Elizabeth Hampton</u>: Regarding considerations/fears/concerns: One of the universal challenges is addressing employee fear in returning to work, and their wishes to escalate PPE for safety that is above and beyond OSHA guidelines; the range of consumer and worker laxity vs hypervigilance when it comes to safety; best practices in leadership during fear and change to both hold space for employees to share their concerns as well as using time stamped, evidence-based data to establish agreements for best practices.</p> <p><u>Christie</u> Can we sign up to be on an email list possibly?</p> <p><u>Robert Mittendorf</u> where will we find the recording of the meeting? How can I listen to the recording?</p> <p><i>A link to the recording will be posted in the Whatcom County online agenda center and there will be a link from the new task force page which will be located in Boards and Commissions under the Public Health Advisory Board.</i></p> <p><u>Other questions:</u></p> <p>How will you educate the community? <i>The task force goal is not to educate but to hear from the community and business leaders and come up with a set of recommendations, and to create a communication line with businesses and the community at large.</i></p> <p>What about the desire for PPE more than what is recommended? <i>We will dive into this once the task force is formed.</i></p> <p>How will we know about future meetings so we can join them? <i>We are creating a task force web page, they will be on the Health Department online calendar, and they will be listed in the online agenda center under PHAB. You can subscribe to get notifications when a PHAB agenda is posted. If you have trouble finding it please email the Health Department and we will respond with the information.</i></p> <p>Questions or comments can be sent to: <a href="mailto:Health@co.whatcom.wa.us">Health@co.whatcom.wa.us</a></p> <p><i>Thank you all for coming and participating in the meeting today.</i></p> |
| <b>Adjourn</b>                      | Meeting adjourned at 4:28   |
| <b>Link to recording of meeting</b> |   |