



## Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date/Time/Location:** June 11, 2020 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM – Virtual Meeting

**WCHAC Members Present:** Paul Schissler, Anne Deacon, Diana Phair, Karen Burke, Debbie Paton, Hadrian Starr, Samya Lutz, Marc Walker, Brien Thane, Satpal Sidhu, Emily O'Connor, Kyle Christiansen, Mike Parker, Tara Sundin

**WCHAC Members Absent:** Mike Jones

**Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests:** Ann Beck, Human Services Supervisor; Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Human Services Housing Specialist; Chris D'Onofrio, Human Services Housing Specialist; Samantha Murdoch, Coordinator  
Guests: Amanda Hubik, Wendy Lawrence, Helen Campbell, Greg Winter, Teri Bryant, Sophie....

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
<b>A. Call to order, introductions</b>	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	<b>Debbie Paton</b>
<b>B. Agenda Review</b>	Add to the agenda: February, March and April minutes approval. Executive Sidhu reminded committee COVID dollars from CARES Act available and would like committee to consider best use for it, urging to consider outside of Bellingham.	<b>Debbie</b>
<b>C. Public Comment</b>	No public comment.	<b>Karen</b>
<b>D. New Business</b> <i>A. February, March and April, 2020 Minutes Approval</i>	<p>Anne moved that the minutes from the February meeting be approved as presented. Samya seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.</p> <p>Mike moved that the minutes from the March Special meeting be approved as amended to add request to updated scenario with blended approach to combine rental assistance and capital funds under perspective on the second page. Anne seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.</p> <p>Anne moved that the minutes from the April meeting be approved as presented. Samya seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.</p>	<p><b>Ayes: 14 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b></p> <p><b>Ayes: 14 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b></p> <p><b>Ayes: 14 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b></p>



Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
<p><b>E. Reports/Discussion</b></p> <p>A. <i>CARES Funding</i></p> <p>B. <i>1406 Rental Assistance</i></p> <p>C. <i>Sales Tax Revenue Trends</i></p>	<p>The County has tentatively set aside about 15% of CARES funding for Human Services, which would include food security, housing security, shelter supports, and Behavioral Health. Currently considering what to prioritize and how to be sure to spend the entire fund by the end of October. The fund is about \$2 million and we are looking at four categories. Housing Assistance to assist people up to 80% AMI before pandemic and show a decreased income as a result of the pandemic; Food Security by working with partners to determine unmet needs; Shelter Support by increasing options for social distancing; Behavioral Health by increasing telehealth options which requires equipment that meets standards for privacy. Current allocation is \$700k to housing, \$550k for shelter and hygiene support, \$400k for food security, \$350k to behavioral health. The County is working closely with City of Bellingham to align with the CARES Act funding, and also working with the small cities for maximum utilization. These numbers were calculated through these discussions, as well as including community partners to gauge needs. Council does have some say on priorities and decision making as well. The Committee was asked for a vote to support this general outline of plan to use the CARES Act funding. Karen moved to approve this priority and framework; Mike seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.</p> <p>During the month of May, Opportunity Council served 17 households which included 13 families and 4 single person households. Currently there is a little over \$20k available, and the month is filled with appointments. There are more challenges due to the unemployment system not being caught up. Many families had relied on other members are on fixed income, and job losses being reported due to lack of child care. As higher income households seek supports, the screening process is more challenging for completion.</p> <p>Cities are reporting less revenue than expected. This has impacted the Behavioral Health Fund, which impacts housing programs as well. The support provided from this fund will need to decrease by about \$700k. Currently we have received additional dollars for housing supports from state and federal government. There is a scrutinizing process of the programs we fund, to ensure it produces the results as a priority to the County and community. This will be a difficult process.</p>	<p><b>Anne</b></p> <p><b>Ayes: 14 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b></p> <p><b>Debbie</b></p> <p><b>Anne</b></p>



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D. Drop-In Center	<p>The County is working with the City of Bellingham and Lighthouse Mission to find a new location for the drop in center. The Depot Market is an option and could be used for the next 3 to 4 years, allowing social distancing. During that time the Lighthouse Mission can spend time on their capital project for a low barrier shelter. Some of the money received from state and federal government will be helpful in supporting this. If the drop in center returns from the Bellingham High School to the current location, an additional 100 to 110 people will not be able to be sheltered there due to capacity.</p>	<p><b>Anne</b></p>
F. WHSC Update	<p>Finishing up the last edits on the Point In Time Count. The numbers of people counted decreased from 700 individuals last year to 693 this year, however greater number of households being homeless, but fewer households with children. At this time we are working on educating about COVID-19 and hygiene, working with landlord liaison to be one on one so a lot of needs have increased.</p>	<p><b>Teri</b></p>
G. COB Update	<p>A memo and preliminary draft letter had been sent out before the meeting for members to review. Not all agencies use the 9% low income tax program, but it brings a lot to our community. There is discussion about a new fund approach for the metro pool. Whatcom is the smallest of the 5 counties for the metro pool. Traditionally counties within the pool compete for dollars. They are proposing for each county to have a predictable allocation. The letter has three messages: generally support the proposal, clarify allocation is intended to represent an average 'fair share' over time and may fluctuate year-to-year, and proposing flexibility in point system. Michael Jones had conveyed his support for this letter and feels flexibility for points is helpful for urban small city projects (for example, they may be close to walking access and in dense areas for work but score low for transit access).</p> <p>The Committee was asked for a vote to support this memo and letter. Mike moved to support the letter as written, Brien seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.</p> <p>Samya will provide the final letter to Debbie for signature.</p>	<p><b>Samya</b></p> <p><b>Ayes: 14 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b></p>

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Health Department



Erika Lautenbach, Director  
Greg Stern, M.D., Health Officer

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
H. ADJOURN	9:30am	Debbie
<i>NEXT MEETING</i>	<b>Next regular meeting August 13, 2020, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.</b> <b><u>VIRTUAL</u></b>	