



## Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date/Time/Location:** April 8, 2021 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM – Virtual Meeting

**WCHAC Members Present:** Diana Phair, Anne Deacon, Michael Jones, Satpal Sidhu, Tara Sundin, Brien Thane, Deanna Wildermuth, Hadrian Starr, Kyle Christensen, Dean Fearing

**WCHAC Members Absent:** Ashley Thomasson, Teri Bryant, Samya Lutz

**Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests:** Chris D’Onofrio, Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Ashley Geleynse, Debbie Paton, Amanda Hubik, Helen Campbell, Tyler Schroeder, Liz Marshall

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
<b>A. Call to order, introductions</b>	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	<b>Brien</b>
<b>B. Minutes Approval</b> Feb 2021 Minutes Approval	Michael moved that the minutes from the February meeting be approved. Anne seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.	<b>Ayes: 9 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed</b>
<b>C. Agenda Review</b>	No additions to agenda. WHSC Update was removed from agenda because no representative from WHSC was present.	<b>Brien</b>
<b>D. Membership Update</b>	Teri Bryant, the WHSC representative joined the board a couple months ago. New members as of March include Deanna Wildermuth, Executive Director of Interfaith Coalition, Dean Fearing, Executive Director of Kulshan Community Land Trust, and Ashley Thomasson, Housing Program Director for Lydia Place.	<b>Chris</b>
<b>E. Reports/Discussion</b> 1. Case Management RFP Results	The five highest scoring applications will be funded through case management contracts for six months starting July 1 <sup>st</sup> . The variety of winning agencies are Catholic Community Services, Northwest Youth Services, Lydia Place, Opportunity Council, and the YWCA. The total going out in contracts will be about \$700-800k July-December, and contracts can be extended for up to four years after December. In addition, the County has been working with the City of Bellingham (COB) to improve the case management workforce to supplement our housing services. Case management services will reach single adults, families with children, and the youth/young	<b>Chris Anne</b>



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<p>2. New Funding: HB1590</p>	<p>adult population. Clients will be served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid-rehousing, and permanent supportive housing projects.</p> <p>HB1590 is a state statute that allows cities and counties to pass an increase to the local sales tax by 1/10 of 1%. The City of Bellingham (COB) passed the tax, and will collect as much as \$3M in annual revenue. The County also passed the tax, which will contribute as much as \$2M annually. At least 60% must be used for affordable housing and behavioral health facility capital projects for households at 60% AMI or below, with certain populations being prioritized. The up to 40% may be used for housing related and behavioral health services. The County will coordinate efforts with the COB and small cities to enhance money available.</p> <p>The County Code states that this committee is responsible for providing the direction for this sales tax revenue. Executive Sidhu would like this committee to develop five-ten year plan, with full focus on small cities by 2023. The COB has been working on the project pipeline, and has 40 years of experience with housing development. COB can help with the loan program aspect of development projects outside of Bellingham, and in turn the County can help the City with providing behavioral health services for programs. There are more projects in the pipeline than there are dollars. The City is recommending that 1590 revenue goes to fund projects currently in the pipeline, but wait to allocate behavioral health funds until the City and County work together to develop a plan. Tara reminded the committee that the City also has Community Development Advisory Board.</p> <p>The Committee discussed how they would work through making recommendations for the new sales tax, including the role of the Affordable Housing Planning Group, and using a similar process as making recommendations for 1406 dollars. One possible immediate need for the use of the new funds is to help with Phase 3 of the Bellingham Housing Authority's Samish Commons project as they have run into some issues delaying construction, driving up costs. Anne asked the committee if it would be reasonable for 1406 or 1590 dollars to go toward finishing this project. Tara and Michael are open to this idea. The County will look at the Affordable Housing Planning Group membership to see how it can be expanded to incorporate small cities.</p>	<p><b>Anne</b></p>
<p>3. Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Funding</p>	<p>The Eviction Moratorium has been extended through the end of June. Opportunity Council is processing about 350-400 applications per month, and distributing rental assistance funds received from the Department of Commerce and United States Treasury Department totaling about \$16M. We anticipate the need is about as</p>	<p><b>Chris Anne</b></p>



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	<p>great as the amount of resources we've received. The funds can cover up to 12 months in arrears, and up to 3 months at a time in future rents, up to 12 months total. There may be more funds coming in through the American Rescue Plan.</p> <p>The Housing Authority was able to secure 75 additional mainstream vouchers from HUD, providing permanent/long term assistance for households with one adult that has a disability. The Housing Authority may be receiving additional housing choice vouchers administered through local preference providers Opportunity Council, Lydia Place, and Northwest Youth Services, and will know more later next month.</p> <p>About 80% of Lummi Nation HUD homes are getting rental assistance and utilities. The funding has been extended into next year, to spend a total of \$4.3M. The Tribe anticipates an additional \$2.3M coming in for mortgage assistance in the next couple weeks.</p> <p>All cities and utility companies outside of cities are invited to talk with Debbie Paton from the Opportunity Council to explore solutions for catching up on utility payments.</p>	
4. 1406 Update	Tara recommended sticking with the 60% allocated to rental assistance for families with children in 2020-2021, but suggests revisiting the dollars allocated toward capital projects outside the COB. The committee discussed 1406, and the County will stick with the recommendation voted on by this committee and adjust as needed.	
5. Point-In-Time Count Update	The PIT Count took place in late January, into February. There was a larger undercount than usual outside of the COB because surveying was limited due to COVID-19 and because the Homeless Outreach Team's area of operation is limited to the City of Bellingham. 862 individuals were counted from 625 different households, about a 15-20% increase from 2020. The most notable difference from last year is the dramatic increase of people sheltered in hotels, which almost lines up with the increase exactly. This could be due to several factors relating to the pandemic. The Whatcom Homeless Service Center and the County are co-authoring the report, which is expected to be completed by the end of the month.	<b>Chris</b>
6. Homeless Strategies Workgroup Update	The City and County offered to put together needs assessment for the Homeless Strategies Workgroup, a workgroup created by County Council to address sheltering needs for people experiencing homelessness. On	<b>Anne</b>

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Health Department



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

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7. City Update	<p>April 16<sup>th</sup>, the County will be presenting recommendations for consideration before the workgroup makes their recommendation to County Council. The committee discussed the underutilization of shelters during the winter months, why some people in specialty populations may not be accessing existing shelters, and where there may be a need for more existing shelters</p> <p>COB will be asking to City Council to adopt their Action Plan on April 26<sup>th</sup>. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> Opportunity Council, Lydia Place, and the Housing Authority joined COB to present to City Council. This coming Monday Samya will present proposals for over \$5M of housing and human services dollars.</p>	Tara
<b>F. Public Comment</b>	No public comment.	Brien
<b>G. ADJOURN</b>	9:54am	Brien
<i>NEXT MEETING</i>	<p><b>Next regular meeting June 10, 2021, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.</b> <b><u>VIRTUAL</u></b></p>	