

Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee  
Minutes with Discussion Transcript  
November 15, 2021

**Voting Members Present:** Debbie Ahl, Ryan Allsop, Clark Campbell (Committee Chair), Casey Diggs, Andrew Gamble, Troy Muljat, Bob Pritchett,

**Voting Members Not Present:** Paul Burrill, Sarah Rothenbuhler (Committee Vice Chair),

**Nonvoting members present:** Rud Browne, Seth Fleetwood, Don Goldberg, Michael Jones, Eva Schulte, CJ Seitz,

**Public present:** Ken Bell, Cara Buckingham, Rob Fix, Sam Gearhart, Pete Granger, Brian Heinrich, Jim Kyle, Rose Lathrop, Derek Long, Jennifer Noveck, Guy Occhiogrosso, Liz Purdy, Yuliya Rybalka, Corrinne Sande, Darlene Snider, Michael Shepard, Satpal Sidhu, Flo Simon, Gina Stark, Sandy Ward

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call and Introductions**

Asked for public comments and did introductions for all committee members, then members of the public.

**Announcements**

- Open voting member positions: food processing & manufacturing – Clark has recommended two businesses for membership and will follow up with Don.

**Administrative business (5 min)**

- Approve minutes from October 2021 meeting

**Don Goldberg:** We have a quorum.

**Clark Campbell:** Ok, well, since we got a pretty full agenda, I'm going to go ahead and call to open the meeting. Do we have a second on that? Ok, Debbie, thank you, Debbie Ahl. And then introductions to members of the public that are on the call. So non-voting members that are in attendance. Just announce yourself.

**Don Goldberg:** Why don't I just call them out so that we have some order. Let's start with Derek Long. We have Liz Purdy. Cara's taking Sarah's place for the moment, so she's a voting member. Jim Kyle, Sandy Ward. Pete Granger. Rose Lathrop. Brian Heinrich is probably sitting in for Mayor Seth. Guy with the chamber. Ken Bell. Rob Fix. And Jennifer on my staff and Gina. Yeah. Gina.

**Clark Campbell:** Any comments from the public? Ok, so I the first order of business there is approving the minutes from the October meeting that were sent out. Is there a motion to second the approval on the minutes from October? Ryan, thank you - Ryan Allsop. We still have to open positions for food processing and for manufacturing, so if you have a candidate that you think might be applicable to that forward that onto Don and we'll do a follow up on that.

**Clark Campbell:** We have three topics that we're going to try and try and cover here. The first was an update on the motion that we had submitted to the County Council in support of the EDI funding proposal for workforce housing and for affordable housing. That's been sent. And just getting an update on kind of where that is in the process. We are going to invite Michael Jones from Blaine City Alliance to make a quick update on that.

### **Update on EDI proposal to Whatcom County Council and next steps, Committee Member Don Goldberg**

**Don Goldberg:** Michael's not here today, so maybe I should just back him up really quickly. If you recall, there's EDI, which is our .09 tax rebate that we get in the county because of our previous rural standing. At the county level we have been trying to create a housing program that was presented to us a couple of months ago. That is moving forward to the county council. I believe Jen knows the date. I think it was December 9th or 6th. It is moving forward. They have gone through the details, and they plan on presenting it to council for approval, I believe, next month. Of course, the idea is it's not going to solve our problems, but it's just one of the building blocks to help incentivize more worker housing in particular. If you have any questions on that program, I can forward you the details anytime you'd like.

**Jennifer Noveck:** It'll be on county council's schedule either the 23rd or the 9th.

**Don Goldberg:** 23rd of November? Thank you. Has there been any follow up that we are aware of between the EDI board and the County Council since submitting that?

The EDI board had approved it, so now it's just a matter of the details of the writing and the legality of it. It was being passed around to county legal to make sure the program was meeting all the legal requirements and just getting some details done. At this point, I believe the program is pretty set and that it's just going to be moving forward for county approval.

### **Update on COB zoning changes 'ranged zoning' and revised density requirements, Derek Long, Whatcom Housing Alliance**

**Clark Campbell:** Any other comments or questions on that topic before we move on to the next one? We had initially scheduled Derek Long from Sustainable Connections to come in and make an update for the group on the Whatcom Housing Alliance on some new zoning codes that were being proposed for City of Bellingham, particularly with regard to range zoning with regard to multifamily housing, so I'm going to turn it over to Derek Long to give us an update on that. It does relate back to some of the original recommendations that this group brought to the county council. Derrick, take it away.

**Derek Long:** Thank you. Clark, thanks everyone. Derrick Long, Executive Director and one of the co-founders of Sustainable Connections. One of the major new initiatives for the organization starting about three years ago was to try to help with the housing crisis in our community. As Don mentioned, things like the proposal in front of county council and the EDI board for some incentives for housing. Obviously, you guys all know this, there are no silver bullets to address this issue. We need lots and lots of great ideas, and the housing alliance is a part of what we need. Rose and I had a chance to present to business and commerce -- I suppose it's going on a year and a half ago, maybe two years ago. I thought I'd update everyone here on what we've been up to and where we see new opportunities going forward, and certainly we'll talk about range densities in the zoning project. When we originally scheduled to present on this, it was moving at kind of a slow pace at the City of Bellingham, but then it sped up and it passed quickly about a week and a half ago. That's good news for us. I'm going to go ahead and share my screen to better communicate what we have going here. Can you see my slides?

As I mentioned, we formed the housing alliance a lot of partners about three to four years ago. This is just a screenshot of our core membership. I'm really thankful to Pete Dawson for joining in early and Troy to join the housing alliance and support this work, but you could see the membership is very, very diverse. So many of us have a strong connection to housing, whether you're in business and economic development, public health, transportation, the environment, private sector housing development, nonprofit housing development, and local government. All of our missions are at risk if we can't get housing in a good place. Just to give you a sense of who are some of our sponsors, we're really thankful to the Port of Bellingham, the county health department, City of Bellingham, the realtors, and others to help fund this important work. By design by our organization's rules, we have a steering committee that is purposely diverse as well, so we have private developers represented, nonprofit, health department, local government, transportation, folks representing renters, architects -- quite a diverse group, and they work really hard. Primarily our strategies are in technical assistance, education, and advocacy, and I'll talk about those briefly.

One of the most important aspects of what we do is build support in the public. I think many of you have been around long enough to know that a lot of pro housing, pro-growth policies have been stymied for decades in this community, and that's a shame. Part of the reason they've been stymied is because especially when it comes to housing policy, the local policy makers don't represent people with varied experiences. This data is backed up throughout the nation that the folks who tend to come to planning commission meetings and City Council meetings to provide public input tend to be in a pretty privileged place. They tend to own and not rent. They tend to have high education and wealth, and they tend to be pretty happy with their own housing situation. So, they're not motivated to see things change very much. But we've rallied two hundred allies, and these allies are folks who have learned the language of policy and the language of why, if we're going to meet our values as a community, we have to create more housing opportunities. They're advocates, and they go out and attend neighborhood association meetings. Sometimes they get on the boards, sometimes on planning commission and then eventually probably get on council. So, the Bellingham for Everyone campaign is replicated on successful public education events in Seattle and Portland and other cities that we've seen. It really works, and I'll share an example of that in a second.

Here's some sense of some of the policy victories we've had recently. The Bellingham Home Fund, which we endorsed and worked hard to help get passed provided five million a year for subsidized housing. We worked really hard to get the ADU ordinance when it first came up in 2018. The plan was to just allow a pilot project in Happy Valley, and we worked really, really hard to make sure it was citywide. Now the city is getting about 50 to 60 new ADUs a year, because it's allowed in all neighborhoods. And remarkably enough, city staff are not getting negative public comments about these homes. There were predictions of the sky falling with allowing ADUs in all neighborhoods, but those predictions didn't prove to be true. Virtually there were no negative public comments, and it's been on the books for two and a half years in all neighborhoods, and like I said, there are 50 to 60 new homes a year. It's a decent pace. We could stand to have more. Then the Fountain District Urban Village. This was an update that created the opportunity for up to 322 new homes. The landowners and developers in that urban village district said that the current urban village plan was troublesome, and there were a lot of great projects that just weren't penciling out.

We made the improvements we needed and freed up the potential for 322 new homes. I think one of the main things I want to stress about this policy victory is that the positive pro housing comments outnumbered negative comments ten to one. That's never happened in Bellingham before. We also supported the transportation fund renewal and then most recently, the residential multi project. For those who don't know there are special zones in the City of Bellingham that makes up about 12% of our total land area in the city. Previously, the residential multi zones had up to 93 different regulatory categories. It was just all over the board, so it resulted in unnecessary time and complication and cost for developers who are looking to build in those zones. It got slowed down due to COVID, and it was a real grind. Then suddenly it picked up again and positive comments vastly outnumbered negative, and City Council voted to approve the RN zoning changes to achieve the intended densities in the RN zones. I think it was two weeks ago, so that's very, very exciting.

The housing alliance is now eyeing some of its future priorities. Some of them that might be of interest to this group include a new round of looking at the in-fill toolkit. This is a policy that promotes seven different small housing types. When it passed originally, it passed for only the residential multi zones. That's only 12% of our land area. These housing forms include duplexes, small homes on small lots, cottage homes, things that are often detached and offer a lot more opportunities for home ownership that may be a lot of the other development we're going to see in urban villages and residential multi. So, it's going in front of City Council on December 6th for public comment, and the housing alliance is scrambling quickly to get on top of not only all the details of the staff recommendations but trying to come up with a strategy for how we want to contribute to this debate. The city planners haven't seen developers use the infill toolkit until maybe the last three or four years. They've learned a lot about where improvements need to be to be made, and it appears we're still trying to figure out planning staff's approach.

They might want to be looking at just making some improvements that are kind of fast and can be approved only for residential multi now, where they don't expect a lot of opposition, then in 2022 pick up the in-fill toolkit and try to figure out if we can make the improvements we need, including expanding

these housing type potential developments into single family zones. That will require a fair amount more public involvement, but it would unleash a lot more potential for more housing as well. We don't know how the housing alliance feels about this idea of doing faster incremental policy change versus shooting for perfect right out of the gates. I thought I'd share, because you guys all know Jori -- City Manager for the City of Ferndale and former planning director there. Jori said that something he's learned about working with city councils and planning commissions is that it's important to build muscle memory for what their jobs are. He has found a lot of success keeping decisions about housing and land use and development coming at a more rapid pace for planning commission and city council, so that there's something they're talking about and potentially passing at almost every meeting. Then they've got good muscle memory and they're moving quickly.

The strategy here is still undecided, but I do think this is something that business and commerce might want to choose to have a voice in. When the housing alliance, probably within the next month, less more working with City Council and planning staff, decides what our strategy will be, we'll be happy to share it with you guys. You can all decide what you think might work for you. There are more ADU revisions coming up. The last ADU ordinance was good, but now that we've had, two and a half years of experience trying to get these built and recognizing that it's time consuming and costly, there are ways to make it easier and less expensive. We're going to be working with the city on those revisions. Then before we know it, comprehensive planning is going to be in front of planning staff and City Council, so we're preparing for that. Also, project we have, which I think will be of interest to this group is around the creation of more permanently affordable housing and home ownership opportunities.

We know we're not going to subsidize our way out of this housing crisis. We also know that our nonprofit developers work really, really hard and figure out some pretty complex financing schemes to get their projects built. But the scale of the problem is well out of reach of our nonprofit partners' ability to build new housing. We're really exploring this opportunity of more partnership between nonprofit developers and private developers where the private developers do what they do best, which is get projects built. We'll need to figure out how to create incentives for private developers to create permanently affordable housing as a portion of their new developments and set incentives in the right place, so it looks attractive. We want to get good partnerships going and get the pace of new development picking up. Of course, that's going to require a lot of creative financing solutions, one of which is the exciting idea moving through that Don and Mike and Jori worked on with the EDI funds. Rose is listening in and her technical knowledge on these topics is about 10 times mine. Rose has a grant deadline at the end of the day today, and I promised that I would do my best at this presentation but call her in if I needed her. Rose, have I left anything significant out that you would like to emphasize for the Business and Commerce Committee?

**Rose Lathrop:** The only thing that I just want to sort of reiterate is the value of our membership really coming together. When these things are going in front of City Council and County Council, we're able to generate letters from a wide breadth of organizations, so it's not just one letter from the housing alliance. The engagement that we're getting from our members is truly where the power lies, so for those of you that are members and want to be more involved, there's always opportunities. If anybody is interested in

becoming a member and you're not, just let us know. We'd be happy to share the information with you and what our expectations are.

**Don Goldberg:** One of the things that you may want to bring up is the need for funding of the organization.

**Derek Long:** We've been we've been hustling this unique addition to our efforts to create more housing opportunities here. We are appreciative of the membership fees that we get from members and some sponsorship fees, but the program's been stuck with a budget of about \$70-\$80k a year for the last three years. That's getting us barely a half FTE and not enough resources. In some cases, we're going to benefit from hiring contractors to make sure the products were producing are excellent. For example, the workforce housing research project that I mentioned -- we could use a little consulting budget for that. In the end, what the housing alliance could really use in addition to Rose's experience -- Rose has 15 years in the private sector developing homes before she joined Sustainable Connections -- but she runs three programs for me. We need another person on our team that has brought projects through the entitlement process and gotten them built and knows what the process is like. I have a dream of hiring somebody that's six to eight years into their career, and this isn't going to be somebody that comes cheap, but it would add a lot of value and to our work.

I'm openly fundraising to get that budget up to more like \$225 - \$250k/year. I've been really pleased with the support in the executive's office, and we have a supplemental budget request going in front of county council on November 23rd that will provide almost half of what we're looking for next year. Then I'm going to be talking to Mayor Seth. I've been grateful for the last several years for steady support at like \$20k from the City of Bellingham, but there's a need and an opportunity to jump that number as well. We've turned over all the stones with private foundations, and they're just not there for this kind of work. The private foundations predominantly want to fund real construction of homes and non-profits that build them. The housing alliance is just a little bit different kind of animal, and so the foundations aren't funding it. In the long run, there might be additional business support available, but right now, probably the best solution is to try to ramp up local government support.

Thanks for that opening to describe the financial realities of this organization. I've started a lot of programs in Sustainable Connections and in this community and the batting average is pretty high there. Those programs still exist and they're producing a lot of value in this community, and this one's especially near and dear to my heart. It's also super important to the community, and I want to see it fly. It's probably the kind of initiative that, once it's on a more stable basis, could be spun off to be its own organization, so that it gets the focus that it needs. Let's see if there are some questions in the chat.

(Looking at chat) Yeah, Ryan, I see your point about property taxes.

**Ryan Allsop:** I think we're all in sticker shock this month. I would say everybody on this panel probably had sticker shock this month. There's a lot of us it's not a major factor, but there are a lot of people out there that it does drive decision making.

**Derek Long:** Point well taken. And Ken, your question is more of a that's more of a question for Don and his team.

**Ken Bell:** Maybe for a later time, I just wanted to make sure we don't lose the recommendations that we put on to the county council, and I kind of want to see where they are going into next year. Not for you. Sorry. Yeah.

**Don Goldberg:** I was just actually starting to answer you Ken, but maybe you and I can talk about it.

**Ken Bell:** Well, I think I think the whole committee should hear where we are. It's not my proposal. It's the committee's proposal. Not that I don't want to have a meeting with you, Don. I'm not asking it for that purpose.

**Don Goldberg:** Yeah, no, I appreciate it. We'll put it on maybe our next agenda to get a full update on it.

**Clark Campbell:** One of the topics that we didn't touch on other than it passed was the zoning change with regard to the City of Bellingham. Could you just give a quick update to the group on what that was and its impact?

**Derek Long:** The residential multi? So that was the piece of the presentation I was talking about how 12% of our land mass is designated as residential multi and City Staff's analysis was that if we could increase some density in those areas, we could achieve -- just on vacant land alone in the RN -- about 1000 more homes. But I think we can anticipate that it'll be a bit higher than that, because that's just vacant land. Perhaps the new density levels will encourage people with existing structures to update and build bigger. It was a big project, and it represents potential for a lot more homes. So, we're pretty excited about it and seeing. I'm seeing some vacant land right near my house and the Fountain District that have been gravel lots for a long, long time, and they're getting built now. Probably what I'll do is for those who want to dig in more, I'll send over one or two pages from the City of Bellingham that can tell you about the key benefits of that new policy. Would that work OK for everyone to have that resource?

**Clark Campbell:** That'd be great. The key thing I'm trying to understand is, was this just a slight tweak of existing code or was it a complete rewrite and expansion within it? It sounds like with an intent to create more density and more housing?

**Derek Long:** Yes, for sure. It was substantial and one of the things they created was more simplicity in the RN zone areas. There were 93 or 94 different categories of density in the RN zones, and this policy shrinks it down to three. So, a developer gets a chance to build a project using the new policy, and they know as they're scouting other sites, they'll be able to tell pretty easily which of the 93 different categories does this fall into and how familiar or unfamiliar am I with that category? With this project I just built that is successful, would that be allowed in this other zone because there are benefits sometimes to just repeating a project. So now we're down to three, which makes it a bit simpler. Rose, you might have

additional information. And by the way, Rose also joined the planning commission last year, and she's just knocking it out of the park in the planning commission,

**Rose Lathrop:** The other thing to note about the changes to RN zone is that they now have density minimums where before typically we see maximums where you can only build up to this many. Now they're saying you have to build a baseline number. That's really how they're going to get vetted, achieving the intended densities that they're looking for. What we've been seeing is a lot of single family residential being built in the multifamily zone, because we only have 12% of Bellingham's land as residential multifamily. When you take some of that and you're creating single family in that area, you're kind of losing opportunity for those for that density where we're trying to plan for growth. Now it's just sort of shuffling the problem around, like where do we provide homes for people? If those are the areas that were intended for more of the apartments and multifamily type, the infill toolkit, there is more types of housing that are allowed in more areas now through the residential multifamily changes. Hopefully our development community is going to see that it's favorable to them.

**Don Goldberg:** Rose. It's Don. Ryan, just put something in the chat asking if there is a comparison to fees for the county area, as well as how we compare to other places?

**Rose Lathrop:** I haven't seen anything current. I have seen it done many times over the years where they're comparing our impact fees, system development charges, and building permit fees altogether. I think the ones that usually provide the sticker shock for folks are park impact fees and transportation impact fees. School impact fees are going way up this year. I think that's something that people are going to be kind of surprised about and also these are services that we like to have fully funded. So as a community, we've decided that we have this level of service for our parks and for our community, and that's why in Bellingham, we have a high park impact fee. So, I think there are certainly opportunities for costs to come down around permitting, but that's probably not going to be the place that we're going to see so much that it's going to impact the affordable housing prices. It's certainly worth continuing to provide analysis, but it's really system development charges and impact fees. It's not really the actual building permit fees that cost a lot.

**Ryan Allsop:** Troy, maybe, you know, offhand. In the City of Bellingham, I think it's thirty-five to forty thousand dollars for just to permit a single-family residence. Obviously, commercial is completely different. It's the traffic improvement fees that's totally different from a single-family residence. I don't know what the county is or some of the smaller towns in the county, but I know I've looked at permits to build a house and over the Winthrop area it was \$3,000 or something. It's just ridiculously different all over the state. It'd be great to get a chart and comparison because it doesn't matter on a \$1m - \$2m house as much as it does on the \$350k house when you say that's 10 percent of the cost. So, it's a huge factor, in my opinion.

**Rose Lathrop:** Agreed.

**Don Goldberg:** Michael, are you aware of anything that's been done regionally?

**Michael Jones:** Uh, no, I don't. Excuse me, I'm not aware of anything that's been done recently. Last I checked the typical cost of a single-family residential permit in Blaine was around \$22k, and obviously those fees do have an impact. It's really hard to do an apples-to-apples comparison. I doubt that Winthrop is providing the park services, the trail services, the sewer service, the water sewer service, and many other things that a place like Bellingham or even Blaine is doing. The other piece of course, Ryan not to not to pick on you, but you are also just commenting about property taxes. The money has to come from somewhere because to provide services, water, sewer, electric, policing, all of those kinds of things there. It just costs money.

**Ryan Allsop:** And that's why it's good to have a comparison chart of cities of comparable size, and that's why it's a bit curious just in our county, but then I'd also be curious around the region, even if it's Washington, Oregon, Idaho of comparable size.

**Don Goldberg:** I think Troy had asked a question about buildable land study. Jennifer Novak and I join those meetings and on a committee. Perry, from the Realtor Association, is also asked questions quite often. Jen and I attend most of those meetings.

**Clark Campbell:** It seems like, back to the range zoning, that one of the main recommendations from our group was to simplify the permitting process, which meant simplifying the code. So going from 93 to three sounds like a pretty big move to me. The other recommendation our group made was to not just do that at a city level, but to adopt those as best practice across the county at all the major cities. The question then is there any hope of taking that same approach and getting it adopted at the other cities in the county, or is every county and every city waiting for its council to make a similar move or not?

**Jennifer Noveck:** The county city planner meeting for buildable lands was this past Friday, and one of the items of discussion was renewing the interlocal agreement for county-wide planning policy changes. The one that was in place was an interim agreement, so it came up again on this meeting that it needs to be renewed. There are several issues that people throughout the county are wondering how this can be applied in addition to the Buildable Lands program. For example, at that meeting the watershed in climate action planning person for the county, Chris Elder, spoke and said, 'You know, is this something that could be considered as part of the interlocal agreement?' Most of the discussions has been about what will trigger county wide planning change, so there has to be a certain percentage of the population represented. It has to be a certain number of small cities plus Bellingham to initiate the county wide planning change. Right now, each of the planners was taking the draft of the new interlocal back to their councils to see if they were comfortable with it. So that piece is in process in general, I would say, for planning policies. It's unclear to me how it will be used outside of the Buildable Lands process.

**Clark Campbell:** As a follow up on that, I think part of our group mission here is we are an advocacy and policy group for business and commerce, primarily to the county council, but obviously, everything we do in some way touches on activity that happens in the cities in our county. We did get quite a bit of work to put together that housing recommendation, and I think one of the things for us to think about is as work

gets done -- whether it's at the city or at the county level -- that aligns with those recommendations, that we come out and make a statement in support of that work, particularly if we'd like to see it replicated in other places. I'm not proposing we do anything today, but maybe digging a little bit deeper into specifically what happened with the range zoning updates in City of Bellingham and then potentially making a recommendation to the county council and to the small cities that this policy be adopted county wide.

**Derek Long:** I would recommend when we see any city do something innovative, that we shine a light on it and make sure that the other cities are aware of it. We've been really impressed, for example, with many of the policy changes in the City of Ferndale in the last four or five years to encourage more infill and more development. They are often ahead of Bellingham on those. It's mostly due to lack of resources, but we still have a ton to learn. Mike's been very patient with us to get us up to speed of what's happening in Blaine, but these are just the very earliest conversations. One of our goals, of course, with more staff and resources is to understand the needs and opportunities in the people at work in the small cities to get more housing as well.

#### **Update on workforce issues and post-secondary education initiatives, Committee Member Eva Schulte, Whatcom Community College**

**Clark Campbell:** I definitely see that going both ways. Some of the work that Michael and City of Blaine has done is commendable. I want to make sure that we allowed enough time. Are there any other questions before we move on to the next point? We've got two other things we were going to kind of try and cover in this meeting today. Ok, thank you, Derek. The third topic for today is just an update on workforce issues related to post-secondary education initiatives and Eva Schulte from Whatcom Community College was going to give an update on some of the programs that they are working on there.

**Eva Schulte:** Thanks Clark and thank you, Sarah, for the invitation to engage today. I especially appreciated some questions we had over the last few months about cybersecurity. It feels like it's great timing. You might have been noticing in the news that Whatcom Community College has been busy. Today we wanted to highlight some of our workforce education areas where we see great partnership opportunity for this group and beyond. I did invite several colleagues to join. We have Darlene Snyder, who serves as our interim workforce dean, and also Janice Walker, who has been supporting and leading with Corrinne Sande, the director of the NCyTE Center, this incredible support of cybersecurity both regionally and nationally. We're very proud of Whatcom Community College that we've been able to house that work, and in partnership with many of you who have already been such generous donors and supporters of the foundation, we're glad to be able to work together. Do you feel free to pause along the way, I have a slide deck I'll share in just a moment and then a brief video highlight.

**Don Goldberg:** That's correct.

**Eva Schulte:** Just a couple pieces that we wanted to be sure to draw your attention to. You may know many students who attend Whatcom Community College. Our student body is varied from recent high

school graduates or running start students to second and third career workforce individuals, especially now post-pandemic. We are still recovering clearly and need to be finding ways that people can ramp into their next goal and opportunity. Whatcom Community College is here to find the way. I don't think we need to say a whole lot more, because so many of you know and already engaged with the college. I do think it's important to know that 37% of our college students are first generation. That matters to us. We have about 38% of our student body are students of color, and we're pleased that we've been able to really focus in on equity and inclusion work in making sure that students that are most disenfranchised are receiving the kind of scholarship and emergency fund support that helps them to finish and to achieve their goals. You also hopefully have been visiting the campus and know our gorgeous and beautiful space that offers learning in person and of course online. We're glad we had some early efforts to bring education online pre-pandemic, so we were ready. Of course, our faculty and staff really rallied to ensure that we could do remote learning well this past year and a half.

If you haven't visited campus, we want to invite you to come join us. We'd love to give you a tour, and you're welcome to reach out to me. We'll make sure that happens. Just to one more note, though, on how we've responded to need with those 11,000-some students comes a need for support, and so many of you on this group here at Business and Commerce Advisory Committee have been really generous, so thank you. Our students needed that, and they especially needed a community to show them that they were invested in. In fact, that was in many ways the big motivator to get them through what has been a very challenging time. Everything on this committee --the childcare issues that our students are facing the housing issues -- are doubly impacting our student body. We would be happy to connect you to some of our student stories so you can hear it directly, but we're pleased that we've been able to bring some pretty significant dollars directly into student pockets so they can pay tuition and also have extra funds to support their families during this time. Stimulus dollars over \$2m has been allocated to date, and then generous philanthropic dollars that are merit based through our scholarships.

Here's a little more about demographics for Whatcom Community College. The future of education is changing, and we're well positioned to serve Whatcom County populations that perhaps didn't see they had a future in a particular industry We have Darlene here to share a little bit more. Darlene, do you want to chime in?

**Darlene Snider:** Yes. Thank you also for all your tremendous support and just the way that we can partner together with you to really ensure we have a strong talent pipeline coming through and into your places of work and community.

**Eva Schulte:** We'll hear a little more from Darlene in a moment, but here's a picture of how students are learning and connecting. So, if it's not in your office because of an intern or new hire that you brought from Whatcom Community College, it perhaps is in the Learning Commons where our students are diving into new ways of both learning and leading. If you haven't seen our Phyllis and Charles Self Learning Commons on Kellogg. It's our newest building. It was LEED Gold certified. We're really pleased that it's the second LEED Gold Certified Building in Whatcom County, and it's gorgeous. It has a beautiful maker space with 3D printing labs, and thanks to the foundation where I serve, we've been able to underwrite

the costs of all consumables. BP actually provided that support, and students can make whatever they want from a heart valve to really creative face masks and coverings that are on their foreheads. That has been important for our health profession's work to continue throughout the pandemic.

Learning happens also through tutoring in our Learning Commons, so let us know when you want a tour. We have a new student residence on campus, so that's important for community college learning that the residential experience especially helps our international students and our athletes. They've been here on campus since the pandemic as well. With NCyTE, the National Cybersecurity Training and Education Center, I have Janice Walker here. She has been busy, and I'm so glad we have a few minutes with Janice to hear the latest announcement of our industry and educational partnerships. NCyTE goes far beyond Whatcom County and who better to share that news than one of our partners. Janice, do you want to introduce the video we have?

**Janice Walker:** Hi, everybody, I know many of you from my years when I worked at the college's Dean of Workforce Education. It's really nice to see some familiar faces. I've been working the last couple of years doing special projects support for our cybersecurity grants, and that includes NCyTE, which is a center funded by the National Science Foundation. For many years, we were more focused on the West Coast, and then as a national resource center. Most recently, we were elevated to this national center status, which is the one and only in the country for cybersecurity education funded by National Science Foundation.

What Eva is referring to is a recent partnership that just was announced by Microsoft Philanthropies. We were awarded this \$1.5m grant over three years. It's really to expand upon some of the work we've already been doing and also to establish a partnership with two other entities the American Association of Community Colleges and The Last Mile, which is a nonprofit that provides scholarships and emergency funds to students entering into specific programs. In this instance, it will be specifically cybersecurity. This partnership is very exciting, and Microsoft wanted to kind of do a big splash. They came to campus and did some interviews and that tees up our video here that we're going to just show you a couple of minutes of. If you'd like to see the whole thing, we can put the link in chat.

**Cybersecurity video: Speaker 1, Microsoft:** There's been a real focus on cybersecurity and for good reason. We've entered almost a new era of international relations. We're seeing more actors, more threats, more sophistication, more victims. At Microsoft, we've been increasing our cybersecurity investments, but one of the things we've learned along the way is that part of the country cyber security challenge is actually a cybersecurity workforce challenge. We don't have enough people to do the jobs that need to be done. Today, I'm at Whatcom County College in the beautiful City of Bellingham north of Seattle in the state of Washington. It's one of the national leaders in cybersecurity education. Across the country, we need to turn to the nation's community colleges. They need to work with them and support to educate a bigger, broader, and more diverse cybersecurity workforce. There's no better way to learn than to talk to the people who are leading Whatcom, studying here, and teaching here. Let's see what we can learn from that. And here we are today. Whatcom Community College has this amazing national Resource called NCyTE? What does NCyTE stand for and what is it?

**Video: Corrinne Sande:** So NCyTE stands for the National Cybersecurity Training and Education Center. The goal is to increase the cybersecurity workforce throughout the nation by assisting colleges and universities to graduate more students that can go into the field. There over 500,000 job openings right now that cannot be filled. By not filling those jobs, basically, we're making the country more vulnerable to attack. So, it really is a matter of national security.

**Video: Dr. Kathi Hiyane-Brown:** It's become a crisis in the workforce. And so one of the things that we feel that we really need to do is to partner and to collaborate with government, private business and industry, other higher education institutions as well as the K-12, because it's about creating a pipeline of students -- students who first become aware of the possibilities of a career in cyber education or cybersecurity, and then graduate getting the needed skills and meeting the competencies so that they are employable and they are leading the workforce needs within their communities or throughout the nation. (Video ends)

**Janice Walker:** So, as you can see, it's just a really nice plug for Whatcom and Bellingham, for our college, for the need for the students that were graduating. We also had a great visit from Governor Inslee and included SPIE and Emergency Reporting, now ESO, and Anvil Corporation in that visit. It's just a great way to showcase the partnerships that are going on in our community and that organizations that are hiring our students and to give us greater visibility and funding to expand our mission. With that, I'll hand it back over to Eva and Darlene.

**Eva Schulte:** If you aren't familiar, we have two four-year degree programs, a Bachelor of Applied Science, you'll hear about in a moment from Darlene. And of course, the certificate programs are really at the future pinpoint of what it is education is offering to individuals that just don't have the two and four years to be able to give. We have 600 students here on campus right now and of course, following good COVID protocol, Darlene, you want to tell us more?

**Darlene Snider:** As Eva was mentioning, we have both the two year and four-year option and meaningful certificates now offered at the college to really help to grow that that pipeline. In addition to the cybersecurity bachelor's program, we also have an applied degree in business and computer information services two year degree, criminal justice, health care, visual communications. What's really important, I think, is our relationship and our partnership with industry, and one of the ways that voices are included in our curriculum is through our advisory board. We're very grateful for folks who invest in ensuring that for each one of these programs really is has relevant curriculum and students have meaningful experiences. Another way is internships, and it's become much more of a focus to have those experiences in the workplace. It gives students a way to have embedded skills when they when they graduate so that they're ready to to be employed and to really have meaningful careers in the workplace.

Career Connected Learning is an initiative coming out of the governor's office. It is designed to preserve that pipeline all the way from K through 12 through careers. Whatcom Community College has three career launch programs that are endorsed, which means that is a solid pathway. Those programs are in

our two-year software development, associate degree, Information Systems, and the Cyber Associate degree. What those really do is train the students to engage in those, and a very critical part of that are those experiences either unpaid or paid in industry. I think there are some partners in the room who host our students. We're very grateful to you for that partnership and coming out of COVID now as we recover, we know that we really need to look to those areas and reach out to students and families have been hardest hit by this pandemic and really engage them.

A critical part of that is our relationship with you. Those opportunities to develop those MOUs and also investing in the things that the students need to use so that they're ready and equipped to for the jobs that they're they're heading into. I think one last program that I will mention is our job skills program, and those are noncredit through our continuing education program. That's an initiative where the funding comes directly to small business to help if there's training to keep people in the business and keep them employed by giving them skills that the company really sees as being essential. Some of those partnerships have been with Lynden Doors, Bellingham Farmer's Market and there are others that we partner with to develop those on-site training. Thank you again, and it's really a pleasure to be in this space with all of you.

**Eva Schulte:** So that's intended to be a primer for you on ways to connect with us and really, we want to hear from you. There's not a lot of time on the agenda today, but certainly want to engage on questions and any follow ups. We'd love to follow up offline as you see opportunities to connect and also strategic ways that we can further invest as an institution in the county needs that you see that we as a business and commerce advisory have identified our critical needs. Certainly, childcare has been one of those, as I mentioned and welcome your future ideas. Any questions?

**Clark Campbell:** Great, thanks, Eva. I'll open it up for questions from the committee on anything we've talked about here or anything else related to workforce development in Whatcom County. I had just a quick question with regard to the last program you were talking about with the training development programs. Could you just give a couple of examples of how those worked and what you did?

**Darlene Snider:** Are you speaking of the job skills training program?

**Clark Campbell:** Yeah, the job skills training. Yeah, Lynden Door and a couple of others. If those are the kind of things that you can disclose publicly, it would be interesting to hear just a little bit on what the scope was and what you did.

**Darlene Snider:** Those are through our continuing education program. The director of that program works closely with a business to identify what specifically you're looking for in terms of retaining staff. Different kinds of training programs can be computer related, team building workshops as examples. So, it's a partnership there and hiring individuals who come in and then provide that training. I'd be happy to connect offline about it.

**Clark Campbell:** Potentially an offline thing. I was interested more along the lines of a case study with examples of what exactly was done. But maybe that's more than we have time for here today.

**Don Goldberg:** I don't know if it's under your scope. Do you work with Michael a TAG? Is that part of your team? And maybe you could give us a description of that program?

**Darlene Snider:** We work closely with TAG and those career launch programs that I was just mentioning are examples of that. So really, our relationship with them is to make those connections with industry. Right now, in our career launch, we're working to find partners who will work with us to place students in the program and developing mentor programs, and then also just in terms of more broadly working to make sure that we're reaching out to other entities who are also doing similar work.

### **Update on houselessness and parking enforcement situation, committee member Don Goldberg**

**Clark Campbell:** Thank you, Eva, for that presentation and for the rest of the members there. That was a good overview of some of the programs that Whatcom Community College is working on with regard to workforce development. The last topic we had is getting a little bit more of an update on the parking enforcement, specifically related to the homelessness issue. Don was going to give an update. We did get a little bit from the mayor on that and there is a legal background to this that's created certainly challenges for just implementing straight up parking enforcement. It might behoove our group to have a little bit more background on the specifics of that in terms of the recent court cases and what obstacles that presents to the city and to the police department for enforcement.

**Don Goldberg:** I'll give a quick update, because there's not a bunch of detailed facts quite yet, but Brian Heinrich is with us as well representing the city. He also is attending those meetings. I guess the first thing to be emphasized is the group's contact to the city and wanting something to be done was heard and actions are being taken. It's very complex. Please, Brian, chime in any time. It's a very, very complex process that I've learned a little bit about. The Homestead Act comes into play. It has to do with whether the vehicle is running, whether there's an actual vehicle that's attached to a house versus housing on its own. Each one of these has a little bit different legal ramification to it. Many of these cases came from Seattle, and so the city is trying to act on behalf of the community.

**Of course,** it's something we should all consider. As last night I'm sitting in my home and thinking about how terrible the weather is, I couldn't help think about how bad it must be for the homeless community. They're surely dealing with weather conditions that none of us can even relate to, but the process of taking care of Cornwall in some fashion is happening, and they're going through that process. Brian, anything you can add to that.

**Brian Heinrich:** Not really, that's a good summation, Don. I know that Mayor Seth is on the call as well if he wants to add anything, but I think you captured it pretty well. There are a number of court cases that

we're mindful of as we try and address these parking issues. We are doing an analysis with the Opportunity Council on the Housing Outreach Team to understand what folks who might be camping along Cornwall need and to understand which of those vehicles. Some don't have any claim of ownership, and so we want to address those ones first, the ones that we can tow away that someone isn't living in or isn't using for their shelter. We're going to start there, but just be mindful of that situation. It is incredibly complex as you noted. Mayor, I don't know if you wanted to add anything to that.

**Seth Fleetwood:** No, that's a good summation. Apologies, I'm nursing a nasty cold. We are going to be commencing an effort very soon. For reasons that I mentioned last time, we don't go into specific detail, but we've been working on putting together a good and thorough and comprehensive humane response. We hope that we'll see that area getting cleaned up in the in the near term. I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed by people. As we indicated last time, we care about this issue. It is complicated, but we are responding. Thanks for your patience for just a little longer and stay tuned.

**Clark Campbell:** I guess we could open that up for any questions from the group.

**Bob Pritchett:** I have a question. With the complications of things like homesteading and other things, which I don't know all the details of, but does the moment you turn the ignition off in an RV on a public parking space, does that somehow give you a property right in it that prevents eviction? Or is it because people have been there for weeks and months that they somehow get some kind of entitlement to not being moved? I mean, if we have like an eight-hour parking limit, at the end of those eight hours, is it now legally impossible to enforce that because it's an RV? Is it because it's an RV and not a car? We keep hearing it's very complicated, but I'd love to have a little more detail on why we can't, on the first day someone parks an RV and stays over eight hours, enforce the parking rules. Or could all of us get property rights on city property by parking campers on them.

**Seth Fleetwood:** Bob, I hear your frustration in that question, and I understand it. It's an entirely fair question. To give you an answer with the degree of specificity that I think you would like it'd be nice to have someone from our city attorney or there's Deputy Chief Almer who has been following this most closely from a practical operation perspective who could speak in the detail that you're seeking. The to the initial question, I believe the answer is the former. It's something that attaches if you're living in a structure, and you evidence intent to make that your home. There are some legal niceties to it, and if I was prepared to go into a detail that was sufficient to satisfy you today, I would have. Perhaps we can put together a summary and send it out to the chair of this group, and you'll at least have a little bit better detail as to some of the challenges that we face when it comes to this.

**Bob Pritchett:** That would be helpful. I think if I could simplify the question, it would be 'is it because we don't enforce on a daily basis that we create the more difficult problems'. Is the bigger problem because we let it go and could it help in the future by enforcing parking limits every day.

**Seth Fleetwood:** No, it grows out of the reality of a number of dynamics that were put in place that limited our ability to respond in the context of COVID. And I could cite some realities about CDC

recommendations. I could cite some of the implications over the last year and a half pursuant to the governor's moratorium on the right to commence with evictions. I could cite the State Supreme Court law that talked about different implications as it relates to the Homestead Act overlapping with landlord tenant law and the moratorium, it gets challenging. What I can say is, in a nutshell, our response will involve tagging vehicles, sending people out -- social workers who assess the situation, determine needs, try to gain as much insight as we can relating to what those needs are and help us with relevant information. We've been working with towers and lots. There are complications there with legal implications that make it more difficult. Our hope is that we will tag and begin to enforce our 72-hour rules so that it will break up that concentration at that site, and our hope is to do the same at Civic Field so that they move around. Our intention is to commence enforcement and... more to come.

**Ken Bell:** Got a quick question about Silfab and what kind of outreach we've done to them. I would hate to have them displaced or have any negative impact to them. Are we doing anything to help Silfab and to make sure they understand we want to keep them here?

**Seth Fleetwood:** We had a meeting in the mayor's office some months ago when they came in. Thank you, port. Thank you, Rob Fix. I understand a fence was put up. That was one of the requests that they had made. We care very much about Silfab and want them to remain. They're a great asset in this community. I'm hopeful that the operation that we're going to be beginning will have the effect of improving their situation and causing them to feel greater comfort and being there. I'm hoping that over the long term, this is a historical hiccup rather than a long-term condition for them.

**Ken Bell:** Thanks for that. I just want to make sure that we stay in touch with them often. More communication is better, right?

**Seth Fleetwood:** Absolutely agree with you, Ken. Thank you.

**Clark Campbell:** Other questions? Mayor Seth, thank you for your comments. I think the intent really of putting this on the agenda was it was brought up at the last meeting as a topic. Then what came out of that was this complexity that you're speaking to in terms of the new legal landscape. What our group is trying to get to the heart of is we probably need to understand a little bit of that complexity, so it's not just a statement of 'It's complex.' We want to understand the pieces of it and then understand what the ramifications are to city government in terms of funding. One of the things I'm aware of with the City of Seattle that's been a problem has been that they do tag the vehicles and they do have them towed away and then the private towing company holds an auction and then that vehicle is back on the streets again with a different owner because they don't want to pay for the cost of the destruction of the vehicle that also may not be running. I don't want to get into all of that here, but that's been one of the issues that's come up in places like Ballard where the city contracts for the towing service, the towing service does what towing services do, which is you either pick up your vehicle or we auction it off, and then now you've got a new slightly used nonfunctioning vehicle that can become another thing on the street again. Trying to figure out how to break that cycle and then looking at the resources for that community so that they've got other options besides a broken-down vehicle that they got at auction from a towing service.

**Seth Fleetwood:** It's all part of the equation, and I guess the word complex challenge isn't the most popular word. I get that you all get it, and those are all the sorts of dynamics we want to avoid. Creating a plan that works to address that successfully is part of the effort.

**Clark Campbell:** We have a few more minutes left. Surprisingly, we made it through four topics today, so I'm happy to continue on to this unless there's another topic we want to touch on.

**Don Goldberg:** I don't think so. We haven't asked Rudd to give us an update at county level. Maybe we didn't have him on the schedule, but maybe we can ask Rudd to chime in and give us a little update.

**Whatcom County Council Updates**, committee member, Rud Browne, Whatcom County Council

**Rudd Browne:** There's not much to update, other than the fact that Seth has my full sympathy at dealing with this problem, because the county certainly dealing with it from a health department perspective. I think some of the things are going to come back with is the the court rulings about the rights to reside or the right to have some sort of accommodation. I'm not sure that's what specifically applying here. From the county perspective, the main things we're working on at the moment is the biannual budget, which is available online if you want to have a look at it. We had a presentation came back from the Child and Family Action Task Force for suggestions on what we should do with the ARPA money. The list of suggestions had a lot of good ones. Some were not practical, such as we use ARPA money to fund family paid leave. I think that would be problematic under state law, among other things. I put all the suggestions in a spreadsheet and tried to cost them. My preliminary estimates show that if we did half of what was suggested, we'd run out of the money within 12 months. So, we've obviously got to make some tough decisions as to how we allocate that. I will send the group a copy of that spreadsheet and the findings. Would certainly welcome your feedback, and just as a reminder, the next meeting here will be my last meeting as I decided not to run for reelection back in January. Stop smiling, Troy. I've really enjoyed working with this group, and if there's anything you want to ping me on from a county perspective, you've got 30 days left to do it.

**Don Goldberg:** Do you know when the council will decide who will be our liaison next?

**Rudd Browne:** That'll be in January next year when they do the reorg. So, if you've got someone you want. I suggest you do a bit of politicking to get that person.

**Don Goldberg:** It normally comes off of the Finance Committee, doesn't it?

**Derek Long:** No. On the first meeting of the year, there will be a list of all the positions. The list is published about a month beforehand, and you can get it if you want. There's a list published for the council members, and then on the first meeting, we ask who wants to do certain roles, and if there's more than one person then we make a vote as to which person gets that role. If you want a particular person

for the Business and Commerce Committee, I recommend you reach out to that person and ask them to basically politic for the role. Maybe even write a letter of support. That'll have a big impact, actually.

**Clark Campbell:** Well, thank you for that, Rudd.

**Don Goldberg:** And thank you, Rudd, for all you've done for us.

**Rudd Browne:** Well, I wish it was more, so we are.

**Clark Campbell:** I appreciate your contributions to this group. As a business group, we all understand our businesses and how to run businesses in our sectors. A lot less so in terms of how things get done with regard to county government. I think you have been a good liaison from that perspective. So, thank you.

**Rudd Browne:** I'll leave you with one comment when I announced that I wasn't running again. If you work a lot at the job that I've been doing, it still takes you four years to understand how all the pieces fit together. So, I can tell you from someone who's been on the outside and on the inside of government, the inside is a hell of a lot more complex than it looks like on the outside. One of the real complexities is the fact that you've got everybody looking over your shoulder, and everything you do is subject to state laws and federal laws and funding and public process. You couldn't run a business that way. Why isn't government more like business? Because I guarantee you wouldn't want business to be more like government in terms of all the hoops you've got to jump through to do anything. So, it's a very complex business for the same size revenue or the same size of employees than anything in the private sector.

**Clark Campbell:** On that note, we've come to the end of our time. Unless there are further comments for Rudd, I'll move to close the meeting. Looking for a second? Second, OK, Bob, thank you for that. All right, well, thank you, everyone. We'll get the meeting notes out and follow up from this meeting. Next meeting is what's the date Don?

**Jennifer Noveck:** It's actually the 20th also. The first full week doesn't start until the 6th, so it's a little later.

**Don Goldberg:** If we could maybe discuss, Clark really quick at our next meeting, whether we want to take Rudd's advice and discuss moving forward to a recommendation of a council member for the meeting.

**Clark Campbell:** Yeah. We'll do that. OK. Thank you, everyone.

**Next meeting:** Monday, December 20, 2021 11am