

Whatcom County Business & Commerce Committee

1801 Roeder Avenue ■ Bellingham, WA 98225 ■ wcbcc@portofbellingham.com ■ (360) 715-5118

WCBCC July Meeting Minutes (7/15/24)

WCBCC Members Present

Casey Diggs, WCBCC Co-Chair
Debbie Ahl, Healthcare Industry
Ryan Allsop, Other For-Profit
Pam Brady, Energy
Paul Burrill, Food Processing
Clark Campbell, Recreation
Mayor Greg Hansen
Mayor Kim Lund

Brad Rader, Agriculture
Troy Muljat, Other For-Profit
Sarah Rothenbuhler, Other For-Profit
Tyler Schroeder, Port of Bellingham
CJ Seitz, Higher Education
Mark Stremler, Whatcom County Councilmember
Russell (RB) Tewksbury, Internet Technology

WCBCC Members Absent

Dan Dunne, WCBCC Chair
Pete Dawson, Commercial Real Estate
Matthew Green, Higher Education
Heather Steele, Public K-12 Education

Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu
Chris Trout, Manufacturing
Dana Wilson, Marine Trades

Non-Members/Public Present

Ann Beck, Chris Behee, Port of Bellingham Commissioner Ken Bell, Lana Burrill, Ashley Butenschoen, Andrea Calkins, Barbara Chase, Michael Cohen, Hugh Conroy, Anna Dealy, Andrea Doyle, Jessie Everson, Peter Frazier, Whatcom County Councilmember Kaylee Galloway, Jenny Hagemann, Brian Heinrich, Mauri Ingram, Lindsey Payne Johnstone, Mayor Scott Korthuis, Erika Lautenbach, Troy Lautenbach, Whatcom County Councilmember Michael Lilliquist, Blake Lyon, Robert Mittendorf, Guy Occhiogrosso, Kori Olsen, Kiana Oos, Louise Phillips, Qan (last name not provided), Margaret Reich, George Roche, Andrea Ruback, Whatcom County Councilmember Jon Scanlon, Lyle Sorenson, Gina Stark, Sue Sullivan, Tara Sundin, Riley Sweeney

Call to Order

WCBCC Co-Chair Casey Diggs called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Approval of the Minutes

Clark Campbell moved, seconded by Ryan Allsop, to adopt the meeting minutes from June 17, 2024.
Motion passed.

Whatcom County Fentanyl Resolution, Operations Plan Briefing, Erika Lautenbach, Director, Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS)

WCBCC July Meeting Minutes (7/15/24) – Cont'd

Background

Whatcom County Council voted to declare fentanyl an emergency (April 2024); Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu followed up with an executive order, directing WCHCS to create an operations plan addressing the fentanyl crisis in Whatcom County.

WCHCS Purpose

- Promote health through policy and systems improvement
- Prevent disease and injury
- Provide accurate and reliable health communication, information, and data
- Prepare for and respond to emergencies
- Preserve a healthy environment where everyone can thrive

Fentanyl Operations Plan: Encompasses PITA model (Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare/Recovery) strategies, detailed below.

Prevention:

- Deploy primary prevention strategy addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) through early education
- Create an education campaign
- Provide targeted training to medical providers + first responders
- Increase litter clean-up
- Purchase + distribute medication lock bags
- Decrease unsheltered homelessness
- Install at least one naloxone vending machine
- Support an online resource hub incl. service + treatment options (funding approved by Whatcom County Council)

Intervention

- Embed key positions in housing, hospital + other clinical settings
- Plan for a temporary and long-term 23-hour crisis facility
- Partner to develop an overdose response team + increase mobile and field MOUD
- Increase recovery housing
- Create better access to naloxone
- LEAD capacity
- Create an overdose review panel

Treatment

- Enhance and expand existing supports in housing + jail settings
- Build out the therapeutic campus on Division Street
- Support Lummi Nation's secure withdrawal management facility
- Incentivize behavioral health providers to locate and expand locally; Recently added funding to Ferndale Community Services to expand outreach and behavioral health services

Aftercare/Recovery

- Increase recovery housing, incl. tiny home recovery housing
- Support employment and social networks + opportunities for people in recovery
- Provide additional linkages between jail and recovery/treatment opportunities (ex. transportation)

WCBCC July Meeting Minutes (7/15/24) – Cont’d

Fentanyl Ops Plan Funding & Capacity

- Lack of key positions and countywide infrastructure to implement
- Funding sources are not always flexible and have limitations
- Same funding needed for a variety of Council priorities (ex. shelter)
- Absence of emergency declaration and the wait for the budget process will result in delays
- Ops plan does not include the full scope of need or activities to fully address the fentanyl crisis

Whatcom County Shelter Resolution, Whatcom County Councilmembers Kaylee Galloway and John Scanlon

Background

Whatcom County Councilmembers Buchanan, Galloway, and Scanlon co-sponsored Resolution: “Supporting the Expansion of Year-Round Shelter Capacity in Whatcom County.” Resolution stemmed from the noticeable impacts from lack of affordable housing and homelessness on local businesses and community members.

Resolution WHEREAS clauses include:

- Key strategies of the 2019 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness
- Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness 2023 annual report (includes point-in-time survey); County expects 2024 data w/in next month
- Unsheltered homeless data by demographic (includes in- and out-of-school youth)
- Policy work complementary to the existing resolution and the Comprehensive Plan + funding resources available to assist efforts (ex. Economic Development Fund)
- Inventory of partnerships and shelter programs such as Road to Home, Ferndale Community Services, YWCA, Lydia Place, and the Lighthouse Mission/Base Camp
- Demographics of homeless individuals served + a cost breakdown of services, including most effective monetary solutions for shelter

Resolution Resolve statements include:

- County Council declares a goal to achieve functional zero homelessness w/in ten years
- Further aims for expanded year-round shelter capacity:
 - Whatcom County Council requested County Executive to prepare a proposal; Will request feedback from the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee; Goal is to ask for the plan and to budget prior to the Fall budget process + have the advisory committee provide advice to Whatcom County Council (topic to be discussed at 7/23 Whatcom County Council meeting).

Noted Barriers

- Budgets limited with local governments experiencing hiring freeze + sales tax revenue down
 - Ann Beck, Community Health and Human Services Manager, provided funding overview:
 - \$15 mil. housing budget, comprised of either local tax dollars from behavioral health sales tax or document recording fees + quite a bit of funding through the Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) through the Department of Commerce. No funding comes from the general fund.

WCBCC July Meeting Minutes (7/15/24) – Cont'd

Noted Barriers (cont'd)

- Ann Beck, Community Health and Human Services Manager provided a funding overview (cont'd):
 - The entire \$15 mil. allocation is to cover the full spectrum of housing, so there is a need to balance needs. Approx. \$4 mil+/year for resources such as the children and family shelter and winter shelter.
- Lack of physical shelter space and capacity
- Challenges of finding availability of personnel (non-profits); Road to Home at capacity for the current year.

WCBCC recommendations

- Need year-round shelter capacity that is enough to scale as opposed to establishing a whole new shelter + ensuring shelters are a conduit to stable housing with access to services as a required feature.
- Recommend offering priority cold-weather shelter for individuals engaged in attaining year-round access, particularly adults with children.
- Deploy a broader perspective to ensure this is a closed-loop system to address the specific needs of the community.
- Focus on particular groups such as veterans (concentrate due to limited resources).
- Be mindful of scope and direction and consider long-term housing funding resources.
- Need outcome-based data to demand accountability and ROI.
- Integrate language within the Whatcom County Resolution detailing plans to move individuals from addiction recovery to the workforce.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.