



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

MARCH 13, 2023

Present: Allison Bishop, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Chelsea Johnson, Colton Redtfeldt, Gregory Hansen, Jamie Desmul, Jen Wright, Katherine Orlowski, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Keith Montoya, Mary Sewright, Mike Ford, Monika Mahal, Pamela Jons, Ray Deck, Samya Lutz, Sunshine Nelson, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson, Yarrow Greer

Not Present: Carol Frazey, Christina Jackson, Rosalva Santos-Guzman, Sativa Robertson, Sterling Chick, Vann Dartt

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p>Welcome</p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u> I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo. May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county. This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land. Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways. https://www.lhaqtemish.org/ -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and self-care come first. • Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the best intentions. ○ Listen with an open mind and heart. • Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out/Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights. • Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances. • Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County. • What is said here stays here. • Have fun. <p>Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</p>
<p>Approve Meeting Minutes</p>	<p>No amendments to discuss. Minutes from January 9th, 2023, were approved as presented.</p>



<p>Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation</p>	<p>Evaluation tool: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhijyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</p> <p>The purpose of this task force was reviewed, as stated in the Ordinance. “The purpose of Whatcom County Child and Family Well-being Task force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and family make recommendations for improvement for all departments.”</p>
<p>Member Introductions, Community Shares, Shout-outs</p>	<p>Tilda Doughty, Monika Mahal, Pamela Jons, Sarah Kidd, Colton Redtfeldt, Katherine Orlowski introduced themselves as new members.</p> <p>Ann Beck was also introduced as the manager of Community Health and Human Services, a newly blended division of Whatcom County Health and Community Services that encompasses the program supporting this task force.</p>
<p>Election of Co-Chairs for 2023</p>	<p>Allison Williams reviewed the voting process for this task force, Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</p> <p>This tool is a way to build consensus. The task force was asked to use a hand with the camera on to show their vote. If unable to use camera, they can indicate their vote in chat. Allison reminded everyone that if further discussion was needed, it is not required to inform the other members as to why they chose to vote in the way they did.</p> <p>There are four co-chair positions available. The two current co-chairs are requesting to be considered in this election for a second term, Jennifer Wright and Keith Montoya. Two more people have nominated themselves for co-chair positions, Christina Jackson and Ray Deck.</p> <p>The voting structure will be conducted in alphabetical order for each person. The current co-chairs shared that although it would be helpful to have time on the task force prior to being a co-chair, it is very possible to do the research and catch up on the work.</p> <p>The task force was asked if anyone else wanted to be considered in this voting process, with no one indicating they were interested.</p> <p>Each person up for election gave a brief introduction prior to voting.</p> <p>Voting commenced for Christina Jackson. Consensus was met and Christina Jackson was elected as a co-chair.</p> <p>Voting commenced for Jennifer Wright. Consensus was met and Christina Jackson was elected as a co-chair.</p> <p>Voting commenced for Keith Montoya. Consensus was met and Christina Jackson was elected as a co-chair.</p> <p>Voting commenced for Ray Deck. Consensus was met and Christina Jackson was elected as a co-chair.</p> <p>The co-chairs are Christina Jackson, Jennifer Wright, Keith Montoya, Ray Deck and they will hold these positions for one year.</p>
<p>Letter to Whatcom County Council – Recommendation of the Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan</p>	<p>This is a link to the letter presented for vote to show support and recommend the Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan and use of ARPA dollars from the task force.</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zw2mh0MY2XTGmZZU7AvWXNX08WAUqgYRcjt701dbk0/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>The Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan was developed by Whatcom County Health and Human Services, in collaboration with community representatives including this task force. These two strategies, the use of ARPA dollars and the Healthy Children’s Fund, are distinct ways to help children in Whatcom County. There was around \$10 million of ARPA set aside for children, however only \$4.5 million was allocated while waiting for request for proposals and address community needs. The ARPA dollars are meant for large capital projects.</p> <p>The Healthy Children’s Fund is addressing other issues related to child care, instead of creating capital projects. One of the identified needs is access in rural parts of the county. It also focuses on improving access to care with in-home providers and small capital improvements, among other strategies.</p>



Vesla Tonnesson shared the original recommendations on child care: *Permanent Solutions for Child Care Affordability in Whatcom County*. <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/66318/Permanent-Solutions-to-Child-Care-Affordability-2021-10-01> This report made recommendations to Council on how to prioritize funding for child care in our community. Feedback from child care networks, providers, and the community was that we cannot use buildings without support in the industry which includes workforce development, program capacity expansion, family supports, and infrastructure supports. When the report went to Whatcom County Council, they said the ARPA dollars are one time use and they want to use it on capital projects, but cannot do so without sustainable funding. The Healthy Children's Fund (HCF) was intended to intentionally complement the ARPA dollars and maximize outcomes.

In a new development, Kayla Schott-Bresler, designated representative from the Executive's office, provided an update on what is going on with ARPA dollars at this time. Applications for the Request for Proposal (RFP) are still being reviewed and totaled over \$12 million. This does not mean that all applications meet the qualifications. The county has a 44.5 million dollar grant from the Department of the Treasury to be used on a broad array of community need and internal expenditures and the eligibility is quite liberal. The county designated this to buckets of spending back in 2021, and one of those buckets was childcare. County Council at that time had said the plan is to spend \$13 million on childcare capital and stabilization, prior to Healthy Children's Fund being on the ballot. Since then council has budgeted about \$7 million or so of that \$13 million and the County Executive is going to council to ask what they would like to do with the remainder of the funding. The goal is to identify if any plans for this fund use has changed now that the Healthy Children's Fund was approved. There were some changes in expected staffing cost so some of the numbers with the proposed budget are a little different than what was shared in September. Around \$5 million has not been budgeted yet. On March 21st the County Council will decide what the plan is with these excess funds. Kayla shared a spreadsheet of the proposed spending plan going to council.

The HCF staffing was initially budgeted using ARPA funds for the first couple of years and then will come from the Healthy Children's Fund.

A supplanting clause requires funds to be used in a way that it is not in lieu of any federal, state or local dollars already committed to that purpose. The Healthy Children's Fund revenue has this clause. In the local government structure, a commitment of funds is when funds are contracted or budgeted. A spending plan is neither of these. In September, the County Executive brought up the consideration of budgeting these ARPA dollars and was not provided direction. That is why the County Executive is now returning to council and flagging the choices before them and providing some options for consideration. The recommendation is that council thinks deliberately about it given there is now \$100 million dedicated to children and families through the HCF. As an administrator, the executive feels it is their responsibility to flag for the county council that there are options. The County Executive is still finalizing recommendations for these funds, and one alternative option that is being considered is to jump start the behavioral health recommendations associated with the justice center planning stake holder advisory committee which would be behavioral health center and programming. This is just a suggestion and council could allocate this funding to whatever government priorities they choose based on the flexible spending guidance. This could be broadband, childcare, staffing or anything.

Kayla pointed out that the ARPA stabilization dollars that were ear marked for childcare stabilization has \$500,000 and the County Executive is recommending it goes to children and families broadly. This would be up to the council's discretion.

Another recent development is that the County Executive is proposing a change to the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan that they want to bring forward to this group. The edit is an addition of strategy 0 for capital projects. This would be separate from the current minor capital improvements. The intent is to include content on the strategy 0, reflecting that capital projects would be initiated through ARPA funds, and not the HCF. There has been concern in the community that adding this line item will allow a shift of funds to such projects. Kayla indicated that is not the plan, but instead about clarity on capital being a part of the continuum funded originally by ARPA. This offers flexibility, especially with a new fund that may result in substantial reserves if certain strategies cannot



	<p>get off the ground, or a state policy steps in and we do not need to fund at a certain level, or should things change down the road. Even with this change from the County Executive, the County Council is the ultimate decision maker and can reject this change.</p> <p>Kayla mentioned that it is within the role of the task force to provide input to council that counters what the County Executive is recommending.</p> <p>Samya Lutz recommended that the task force proceed with voting on the letter as prepared, and indicate a specific date of the implementation plan that is being supported. Following this up to work with the Executive's office to walk through what the process was to get to these decisions. They shared that it is helpful to use flexible funding where you can to support and elevate programs, while utilizing funding sources with specific expectations, especially if state or federal funds can free up flexible spending funds.</p> <p>Jen Wright recommended creating another letter related to the impacts of the addition from the County Executive, and having a special meeting to vote on sending it from the task force.</p> <p>Staff support from Whatcom County Health and Community Services reminded everyone of the process of special meetings, and the need for space and staff to be available to provide this option for Open Public Meetings Act compliance.</p> <p>The hope is to get a letter or two to the council's office by Friday end of day so that they have time to review and read it before the Tuesday meeting.</p> <p>Ray Deck, III recommended modifying the letter that is currently written to include a paragraph adding clarity about funding coming from ARPA dollars instead of offering a second letter. This was what was quickly drafted for the additional paragraph:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">On 3.13.23, the TF was made aware of a forthcoming proposal by the Executive to add a "Strategy 0". We were surprised by this as Proposition 5 calls for specific community engagement work which the rest of this plan was subject to, but Strategy 0 was not. If, as was told to us, the Executive believes capital investment is an important investment in our community's childcare situation, we would suggest the budget for the first child RFP be increased to 12m in order to fund all of the eligible requests the county has already received.</p> <p>Vesla Tonnesson recommended to vote and designate three people to adjust the letter based on the agreed concept within the conversation.</p> <p>A vote was taken for Ray Deck, Samya Lutz and Jennifer Wright to adjust the letter based on concepts discussed, and then send it on behalf of the task force to Whatcom County Council.</p> <p>The vote passed with consensus.</p> <p>Jed Holmes from the Executive's office shared the system of community input that went into the various phases of this work. This strategy 0 addition was considered and included as part of that process and feedback shared.</p>
<p>Phase III Report Workgroup Recommendations</p>	<p>Allison Williams shared in email the draft of the report to workgroups to gather information. Some feedback has been shared, and was incorporated. The draft report will be sent out on March 24th.</p>
<p>Updates on Child & Family Issues: Whatcom County Health and Community Services, Whatcom County Council,</p>	<p>In January we began providing updates from Whatcom County Health and Community Services, Whatcom County Council, and Whatcom County Executive's Office.</p> <p>Due to time and technical difficulties, Allison Williams will follow up after this meeting with an email outlining these updates.</p>



Whatcom County Executive's Office	
Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan Timeline and Next Steps	The Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan is going to be voted on by Council on March 21 st . Beginning in April thru December work will be done to build an Implementation Team. More information to be sent out on this.
Public Comment	No public comment.
Closing	Adjourned at 5:29PM
Next Meeting	Next regular meeting: April 10, 2023 <u>Location: Hybrid</u>

