



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: August 13, 2020 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM – Virtual Meeting

WCHAC Members Present: Anne Deacon, Samya Lutz, Paul Schissler, Michael Jones, Hadrian Starr, Brien Thane, Emily O’Connor, Tara Sundin, Karen Burke, Satpal Sidhu, Diana Phair

WCHAC Members Absent: Debbie Paton, Marc Walker, Michael Parker, Kyle Christianson

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Ann Beck, Samantha Murdoch, Chris D’Onofrio, Lily Hart, Helen Campbell, Greg Winter, Jed Holmes, Tyler Schroeder

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
A. Call to order, introductions	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	Brien
B. Agenda Review	No proposed changes to the agenda.	Brien
C. Public Comment	No public comment.	Brien
D. New Business A. <i>June 2020 Minutes Approval</i>	Anne moved that the minutes from the June meeting be approved as presented. Michael seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed.	Ayes: 11 Abstain: 0 Motion Passed
E. Reports/Discussion A. <i>CARES Act Funding</i>	The County has brought in over \$6,000,000 into the community over the last several months, though not all COVID-19 related. As more money came in, it was necessary to reallocate purpose and focus for different funds to best align with eligible costs. The county was unaware of the additional funds to be received when the use of the Commerce Grant (COVID-19 Outbreak Emergency Housing Grant) totaling \$905,821 was determined to be used for the new Lighthouse Mission Ministries Base Camp located at the corner of Cornwall and Flora. The Commerce Grant must be spent out by December 31 st , and will be used for lease hold improvements, purchase of furniture, and lease costs. The entire project is over a million dollars; the City of Bellingham is funding the difference.	Anne



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<p>B. 2021 Housing Budget</p>	<p>The CARES Act brought in about \$16,000,000 total to the county; \$2.5 million were dedicated to Human Services activities and were used to support behavioral health and social service agencies, child care, food service, and housing assistance. With additional monies for housing assistance awarded later, the county dedicated approximately \$700k to rental and mortgage assistance. The focus will be on the population between 50% and 80% of the Area Median Income. The county contracted with LAW Advocates, The Salvation Army, and the Opportunity Council to help people apply for assistance.</p> <p>The Lummi Tribal Nation was allocated \$1.5 million through December 31st for rental and mortgage assistance. The assistance has no income limit, and was opened to HUD housing families that were furloughed. The assistance is only available to tribal members, so there is effort being made to connect ineligible non-members to the county funds.</p> <p>The County received almost \$2.7 million in Eviction Prevention Assistance from the State Department of Commerce to be used for eviction prevention only for income-eligible populations (up to 50% of the Area Median Income). Most of the money was contracted to be spent directly through Opportunity Council, and the rest through Northwest Youth Services. An additional \$300k is dedicated to youth and young adults up to age 24. These funds will go to Northwest Youth Services who will work with Opportunity Council to spend out.</p> <p>The Emergency Solutions Grant of almost \$500k can be used for rental assistance, case management to support rental assistance, outreach services, operations, etc., and is available from July 1 2020-Sept 30 2022. Some of these monies are to be focused on on specialty shelters and rental assistance for people in households who have immediate needs.</p> <p>This is a challenging year for us for two reasons: 1. The money that has come in has very specific requirements for how it can be used, and when it needs to be used by. 2. Sales tax has decreased by 23-24%. The Behavioral Health Sales Tax, which is one tenth of one percent of our local sales tax, goes to support behavioral health services in the community. Historically, about 20% of that fund has been dedicated to housing support for people with behavioral health disorders. We figured on about a 15% decrease from that revenue in 2021. We had to look at creative ways to fill some of those gaps in the budget. The budget is made up of about 10 different funding sources in order to create sustainable programs. In the end, we are looking at minimal cuts. 1406 funds are also</p>	<p>Anne</p>



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C. <i>Base Camp</i>	<p>a result of sales tax, and we can collect up to \$680k per year, although we may not hit that mark this year. This year, 1406 funds were dedicated to some to emergency housing, and to the City of Bellingham to provide some relief from the housing levy so they could put more into rental assistance. We are looking at a smaller share of 1406 being spent on rental assistance for the coming year we can work on building a corpus in order to truly launch a capital project. The 2021 Housing Budget, and 1406 Affordable and Supportive Housing funds will be reviewed at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Drop-In Center's new location is impressive; there is a fence around the exterior that gives privacy to guests, and hopefully helps surrounding businesses who were concerned about traffic. So far, it sounds like there have not been any serious issues and it is a well-run program. There is currently a 3-year lease, with the opportunity to add one. The building owner does not want to extend the lease beyond that. The County will pay the lease while Lighthouse Mission launches a capital campaign for the construction of a permanent location.</p>	Anne
D. <i>Shelter RFP</i>	<p>Money was set aside by the state legislature in the last session to increase shelter bed capacity throughout the state. We have applied for just under \$1.2 million to be used through June 2023. These dollars must be used for shelter bed capacity expansion for shelters operational 365 days a year, and the beds must be operation by the end of this year. The monies can be used to serve specialty populations including elderly, medically fragile, and domestic violence victims. We worked with county executive to issue a Request for Proposal for Base Camp before we had budget authority; it will be issued on August 26th. That will leave \$500k to help other agencies that want to increase shelter bed capacity. We have reached out to Interfaith Coalition, Northwest Youth Services, Lydia Place, Opportunity Council, and YWCA. Each bed is reimbursable up to \$56 per night, and there is a \$10,000 per bed capital improvement allowance that is available in advance of shelter operations.</p> <p>There are no low-barrier shelters in the county outside of Bellingham. Interfaith coalition has a few emergency shelter units for households outside of Bellingham. The Family Promise program operated by Interfaith does use churches throughout the county as part of their rotating host network, but the program only serves a small number of people at a time.</p>	Anne
E. <i>WHSC Update</i>	No update.	Greg Winter (guest)

WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department



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

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	<p>enormous with the equity you can realize with a 4% tax credit because it is a floating rate, it might cover 20% of the project. There are proposals in Congress to fix the 4% tax credit at 4%.</p> <p>All cities are eligible for implementing a Multi-family Tax Exemption Program for a. Michael and Tara suggested coordination across the county with developers to figure out how to utilize that program more.</p>	
C. ADJOURN	10:00am	Brien
<i>NEXT MEETING</i>	<p>Next regular meeting October 8, 2020, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.</p> <p><u>VIRTUAL</u></p>	