



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: October 14, 2021 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM – Virtual Meeting

WCHAC Members Present: Karen Burke, Diana Phair, Ashley Thomasson, Deanna Wildermuth, Dean Fearing, Teri Bryant, Brien Thane, Samya Lutz, Kyle Christensen, Tyler Schroeder, Tara Sundin, Michael Jones

WCHAC Members Absent: Hadrian Starr, Marc Walker, Erika Lautenbach

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Chris D’Onofrio, Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Ann Beck, Ashley Geleyense, Chris Kobdish, Marissa McGrath, Mike Parker, Rachel Lucy, Nicole Fields, Greg Winter, Katy Sullivan, Paul Schissler, Helen Campbell

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
A. Call to order, introductions	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	Brien
B. Minutes Approval August 2021 Minutes Approval	Samya moved that the minutes from the June meeting be approved. Karen seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed. Tyler and Michael were not present for the vote.	Ayes: 9 Abstain: 1 Motion Passed
C. Agenda Review	There were no proposed additions to the agenda.	Brien
D. Reports/Discussion	Community partners from Unity Care Northwest, PeaceHealth, and the Opportunity Council gave a presentation on The Way Station, which will be located at 1500 N State St in Bellingham. This project has been evolving over the past three years. Envision the Way Station as a medical facility that will provide wraparound services to people experiencing homelessness. The Way Station’s goal is that visitors become healthier and closer to being able to find a home. The County is taking on the construction and financial management of the project. Anticipated opening is early 2023.	Chris, Greg, Rachel, Tyler
1. Presentation: The Way Station		
2. New Housing Specialist Position Advertisement	The Health Department has not yet found a replacement for Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager; additionally, the Department is down a housing specialist right now. The Health Department is currently hiring for	Ann



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3. Winter Shelter Planning	<p>an additional affordable housing specialist. This new staff person will be working in partnership with all the small cities and with the City of Bellingham.</p> <p>Base Camp, Christ the King Church, YWCA, and Northwest Youth Services have all stepped up to help increase shelter capacity. The goal is to provide space for specific populations and relieve some of the pressure off the large congregate shelters. One of the small cities is also interested in doing a warming center this winter, although it is not confirmed.</p>	Ann
4. Eviction Moratorium/Eviction Resolution Prevention Program	<p>We don't yet know when the Eviction Moratorium is going to end. Rental assistance continues to be put out into the community through Opportunity Council (OC). Originally, OC had to spend down 65% by the end of September otherwise funds would be recaptured, but the Department of Commerce modified that to be 30%, and OC met that goal. The Eviction Resolution Center Pilot Program delivered through the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC) is now operational in Whatcom County through partnerships LAW Advocates, Northwest Justice Project and Superior Court.</p>	Ann
5. County Housing Updates	<p>County staff are in the process of finalizing the 2022 housing budget. The budget total is approximately \$8.6M, the highest and most complex housing budget in the County's history. Altogether there are 28 contracts, and a couple letters of agreement and 15 funding types. The goals for the budget are to be strategic in spending down all available funds, and to braid funding sources together to prevent disruptions in services as certain funding sources run out. The County is receiving requests for additional funding from community partners, particularly for more support to permanent supportive housing facilities. The County has set aside monies from the Behavioral Health Fund for one Behavioral Health Specialist to be hired by Catholic Community Services to service both Francis Place and 22 North. City and County staff continue to work very closely on emergency housing for families with children experiencing homelessness as numbers increase.</p> <p>Barbara shared information about two funding opportunities. 1) Skagit HOME Consortium has an additional \$3.59M available to be spent out by 2030. The Consortium will put out notices of funding availability in one or more of the categories. The City of Bellingham receives their own HOME HUD allocations, so the funding coming to Whatcom County must be used in small cities. County staff will send out different categories and committee members can respond if they want to provide input on what category Skagit should focus on. 2) HUD Continuum</p>	Barbara



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<p>6. COB Update</p> <p>7. WHSC Update</p> <p>8. Economic Investment Board and EDI Funds</p>	<p>of Care Balance of State funds offers funding for existing and new projects. Currently, Opportunity Council and the Housing Authority receive this funding for rental assistance. Applications are due tomorrow, and there is one potential applicant from Whatcom County.</p> <p>Samya added that the HUD HOME Consortium funding can only be used for projects for qualified populations. The City's allocation is just over \$2M. Samya gave a brief update on affordable housing construction projects in the works right now, as well as Northwest Youth Services winter shelter for young adults 18-24 and the Gardenview Tiny House Village getting close to opening. The City continues to work with GS consultants and partners who are dedicated to standing up interim facility for families with children as an alternative to motel stays.</p> <p>Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC) is fully staffed and has a new manager overseeing Coordinated Entry. The Homeless Outreach Team is partnering with People's Bank for Socktober. WHSC's Housing Lab has gone mobile and are available at three locations. Gardenview has been putting in requests for referrals and staff are working on selection process. Next week is Housing Week, and WHSC will be partnering with the Health Department in giving a presentation.</p> <p>Michael shared that Tyler reported to the Economic Investment Board on Economic Development Investment (EDI) funding for a pilot affordable housing project in Blaine which was favorably received, and should go through to County Council in November. Tyler was asked to bring forward any other past or future projects that could be shown as an example to the Board to show how EDI funds could bring projects to fruition.</p>	<p>Samya</p> <p>Teri</p> <p>Michael, Tyler</p>
<p>E. Public Comment</p>	<p>There was no public comment.</p>	
<p>F. ADJOURN</p>	<p>Meeting was adjourned at 9:34.</p>	<p>Brien</p>
<p>NEXT MEETING</p>	<p>Next regular meeting December 9th, 2021, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. <u>VIRTUAL</u></p>	