



## Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee MEETING AGENDA

Thursday August 8, 2024 8:30-10:00 AM

Hybrid: Civic Building 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room (322 N Commercial St) & Zoom

| Agenda Items |  | Time         |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1.           | Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call of Members Present (Dan)      | 8:30 – 8:35  |
| 2.           | Agenda Review (Dan)  |              |
| 3.           | Action Item: Approval of June Meeting Minutes (Dan)                      |              |
| 4.           | Respond to <a href="#">Resolution 2024-036</a> on Shelter Capacity (Dan) | 8:35 – 9:15  |
| 5.           | 2025 Funding Priorities (Dan)  | 9:15 – 9:25  |
| 6.           | Executive’s Office Update (Kayla)  | 9:25 – 9:30  |
| 7.           | Health and Community Services Update (WCHCS Staff)                       | 9:30 – 9:40  |
| 8.           | City of Bellingham Update (Samya)  | 9:40 – 9:45  |
| 9.           | Whatcom Homeless Service Center Update (Teri)                            | 9:45 – 9:50  |
| 10.          | New Business (Dan)   | 9:50 – 9:55  |
| 11.          | Public Comment (2 Minutes Per Person)                                    | 9:55 – 10:00 |
|              | Adjourn (Dan)  |              |

Next meeting: Thursday, October 10, 2024, 8:30-10:00 AM

*Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are asked to contact the meeting facilitator at least 4 business days in advance.*  
[ageleyns@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:ageleyns@co.whatcom.wa.us)



# Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date/Time/Location:** 6/13/2024 / 8:30-10:00am / Hybrid: Civic 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room & Zoom

**Committee Members Present:** Adrienne Renz, Andrew Calkins (future Housing Authority rep), Ann Beck, Ashley Thomasson, Brien Thane, Dan Dunne, Dawna Morse, Diana Phair (late arrival), Mary Lou Steward, Paul Schissler (late arrival), Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin, Teri Bryant, Von Ochoa

**Committee Members Absent:** Bruce Bosch, Kayla Schott-Bresler

**WCHCS Staff/Guest Presenters:** Ashley Geleynse, Chris D'Onofrio, Janie Oliphant, Michaela Mandala / Adrienne Wyld, Avery Hallsted, Turner Campbell

| Agenda Item   | Report/Discussion  |
|---|--|
| 1. Call to order, introductions, and roll call                          | Introductions commenced and quorum present.  |
| 2. Agenda Review  | There were no requested revisions to the agenda.   |
| 3. Approval of Minutes  | Brien moved that the minutes from the March, April, and June special meeting be approved, Ann seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed. Diana and Paul were not yet present for the vote. <b>Yes: 11; No: 0; Abstain: 0</b>  |
| 4. Presentation and Action: Bellis Fair Family Housing Project, Phase 2 | <p>Adrienne Wyld, the Housing Development Manager for Opportunity Council, presented the progress on Phase 2 of the Bells Fair Housing Project. The project will occupy the current motorcycle safety school parking lot, next to the Bells Fair Mall. Phase 2 will have 64 units of housing for seniors aged 62 and older, with 60 units being one-bedroom units and four two-bedroom units for seniors who might need a full-time living caregiver or need to co-house to achieve rent affordability. Twenty percent of the units will be set aside for seniors exiting homelessness.</p> <p>The building will feature ADA accessible gardening patio boxes, enhanced energy code heating and cooling systems, and solar panels. Design review has been submitted with the City of Bellingham and construction is expected to start in September 2025, with completion expected in February 2027 and full occupancy by March 2027. The City of Bellingham has awarded the project \$3.5 million, and Enterprise Community Partners have awarded \$50k for predevelopment costs. The project will be applying to multiple other funding sources over the summer. The committee asked questions and discussed project-based vouchers, urban agriculture, and the City of Bellingham's landmark tree ordinance as it relates to this project.</p> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Samya proposed a <b>motion to recommend Phase 2 of the Bells Fair Housing Project as the committee's chosen 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit priority project.</b></p> <p>Chris clarified that the committee has the ability to designate a specified project to be the County's chosen applicant for 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.</p> <p>Ann seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motioned passed. Teri abstained. <b>Yes: 12; No: 0; Abstain: 1</b></p>  |
| <p><b>5. Draft Resolution on Expanding Shelter Capacity and Creating a Shelter Committee</b></p> | <p>Dan introduced the draft resolution to create a subcommittee of the Housing Advisory Committee to make recommendations on expanding shelter capacity. Dan suggested that the committee review the resolution and send feedback to Council in the form of a memo. As a result of the committee's discussion about the resolution, a memo with the committee's specific recommendations (listed below) will be sent to Council following the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add "Whereas Whatcom County also supports a continuum of housing solutions to help with housing stability ranging from shelters to homeownership and everything in between".</li> <li>• Add "Whereas work addressing the need for shelter should not take away from work elsewhere within that continuum to support housing stability".</li> <li>• Replace "a goal to achieve and maintain functional zero homelessness within 10 years" with "a goal to eliminate unsheltered homelessness within 10 years, with annual progress reports provided by Health and Community Services staff."</li> <li>• Name the subcommittee "Shelter Recommendation Committee" to more clearly define the purpose of the subcommittee.</li> <li>• Include specificity about subcommittee size, composition, and member selection including that:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The subcommittee should be made up of no more than seven Housing Advisory Committee members, plus other subject matter experts, for a total of no more than thirteen people that are selected by the HAC following submission and review of application.</li> <li>- At minimum, the HAC should strive to select membership that includes homeless service/shelter providers, people with lived or living experience, outreach workers (one with medical focus), a small cities representative, a City of Bellingham representative, an Indigenous representative, and immigration representative, and a fire/EMS representative.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Clarify that the task of the subcommittee should be to provide advice on a range of shelter options and potential trade-offs, to the Housing Advisory Committee.</li> <li>• Clarify that the committee feels that exploration of longer-term solutions to end homelessness should occur outside of this subcommittee over a longer timeframe.</li> <li>• Clarify that that the recommendations resulting from the subcommittee should be considered in the broader local plan to end homelessness.</li> </ul> <p>It was confirmed that recommendations that come out of the subcommittee will come to the full committee, who will have an opportunity to make comments before sending to Council.</p> |



|   |   |
|---|---|
| 5. Executive's Office Update              | No update   |
| 5. Health and Community Services Update   | Ann introduced new Housing Program Specialist, Janie Oliphant.  |
| 5. City of Bellingham Update              | No update   |
| 5. Whatcom Homeless Service Center Update | Teri reported a record-breaking shower truck day with 41 showers.   |
| 5. New Business                           | The committee acknowledged that this is Brien's last meeting and expressed their appreciation for his contributions.                  |
| 5. Public Comment                         | Eve from Northwest Youth Services advocated for their organization to have a seat at the table in the shelter work group discussions. |
| Adjourn                                   | The meeting was adjourned.  |

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, October 10, 2024, 8:30-10:00am



# Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
(360) 778-5010

## Agenda Bill Report

File Number: AB2024-492

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**File ID:** AB2024-492      **Version:** 1      **Status:** Substitute Approved  
**File Created:** 07/16/2024      **Entered by:** JGernand@co.whatcom.wa.us  
**Department:** Council Office      **File Type:** Resolution  
  
**Assigned to:** Council Committee of the Whole      **Final Action:** 07/23/2024  
**Agenda Date:** 07/23/2024      **Enactment #:** RES 2024-036  
**Related Files:**

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Primary Contact Email: jgernand@co.whatcom.wa.us

**TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:**

Resolution supporting the expansion of year-round shelter capacity in Whatcom County

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:**

Resolution supporting the expansion of year-round shelter capacity in Whatcom County

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**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE**

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| Date:      | Acting Body:                   | Action:   | Sent To: |
|------------|--------------------------------|---|----------|
| 07/23/2024 | Council Committee of the Whole | SUBSTITUTE<br>RECOMMENDED FOR<br>APPROVAL       |          |
|            |                                | Aye: 4 Buchanan, Donovan, Galloway, and Scanlon |          |
|            |                                | Nay: 3 Byrd, Elenbaas, and Stremier             |          |
| 07/23/2024 | Council                        | SUBSTITUTE APPROVED                             |          |
|            |                                | Aye: 4 Buchanan, Donovan, Galloway, and Scanlon |          |
|            |                                | Nay: 3 Byrd, Elenbaas, and Stremier             |          |

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**Attachments:** Proposed Resolution, Substitute Resolution

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-036**

**SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF YEAR-ROUND SHELTER CAPACITY IN WHATCOM COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, there are many factors leading to housing instability and the most frequent hardship is lack of affordable and available housing; and

**WHEREAS**, Local Plans to End Homelessness are required by Washington State legislation for counties receiving state funding at a minimum of once every five years, with briefer updates annually; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County Health and Community Services (WCHCS) submitted the 2019 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness in Whatcom County with the input of community stakeholders including those with lived experiences; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2019 Strategic Plan was created in alignment with Federal and Washington State plans to prevent and end homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, the Strategic Plan outlined seven key strategies:

1. A Centralized Point of Entry
2. Rapid Re-Housing
3. Permanent Supportive Housing
4. Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing
5. Homelessness Prevention and Diversion
6. Interim Housing
7. Economic Security; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2017 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development released new requirements for "a centralized or coordinated assessment system" (CPD-17-01); and

**WHEREAS**, according to the 2019 Strategic Plan, Whatcom County has two main entry points where the homeless community can register to receive services: Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC), a department of the Opportunity Council, and Northwest Youth Services; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2019 Strategic Plan additionally recognizes intakes are also completed by the Homeless Outreach Team specialists at the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS) safe shelters with Lydia Place staff, at Opportunity Council's East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, and at the Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center; and

**WHEREAS**, coordinated entry processes are intended to help increase the efficiency of local crisis response systems and improve fairness and ease of access to resources; and

**WHEREAS**, anecdotally, many homeless individuals have had challenges navigating Whatcom County's current coordinated entry system and receiving housing and services in a comprehensive and timely manner; and

52  
53 **WHEREAS**, an independent evaluation is needed to better understand and improve  
54 Whatcom County’s coordinated entry system and explore increasing capacity and collaboration to  
55 better meet the needs of the homeless community; and  
56

57 **WHEREAS**, the Homeless Strategies Workgroup (HSW) was established by Resolution  
58 2017-055, and re-convened as per Resolution 2019-034, to identify opportunities for shelters to  
59 meet the needs of Whatcom County’s homeless community; and  
60

61 **WHEREAS**, on May 4, 2021, the HSW presented to the Whatcom County Council a needs  
62 assessment that included a shelter inventory, identified needs and gaps, recommendations, and an  
63 accomplishments list (see AB2021-268); and  
64

65 **WHEREAS**, overarching goals from the HSW recommendations are to:  
66 1. clarify the extent of local government support,  
67 2. prioritize most vulnerable populations,  
68 3. consider strategies and actions appropriate for local governments to support,  
69 4. build upon current resources where possible, and  
70 5. invest in long-term permanent solutions over temporary crisis solutions when resources  
71 are inadequate to do both; and  
72

73 **WHEREAS**, on May 4, 2021, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2021-018  
74 concluding the work of the HSW and transferring responsibilities to the Whatcom County Housing  
75 Advisory Committee; and  
76

77 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness (WCCEH) is a consortium  
78 of public and private agencies and non-profits that collaborate to create a system of housing and  
79 services, with the ultimate goal of moving homeless families and individuals to permanent housing  
80 and self-sufficiency; and  
81

82 **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report provides a deeper understanding of Whatcom  
83 County residents experiencing homelessness with information from the annual Point-in-Time (PIT)  
84 survey and public-school students and their families; and  
85

86 **WHEREAS**, the PIT count is a voluntary survey of people experiencing homelessness on a  
87 single day each year that does not fully represent the true extent of homelessness in Whatcom  
88 County; and  
89

90 **WHEREAS**, the 2023 PIT survey, conducted January 26, 2023, counted 1,059 individuals  
91 from 850 different households experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County; and  
92

93 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, between 2022 and 2023, there was a 27% increase  
94 in persons experiencing homelessness and a 33% increase in households experiencing  
95 homelessness; and  
96

97 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, the numbers of both homeless individuals and  
98 households counted in 2023 are the highest reported since counting began in 2008; and  
99

100 **WHEREAS**, according to the PIT count, of the 1,059 persons counted in the 2023 PIT  
101 survey, 711 slept in shelters or transitional housing facilities and 348 were unsheltered; and  
102

103           **WHEREAS**, between the 2022 and 2023 PIT counts, there was a 9% increase in sheltered  
104 individuals counted and an 8% increase in the number of sheltered households; and

105  
106           **WHEREAS**, between the 2022 and 2023 PIT counts, there was a 91% increase in  
107 unsheltered individuals counted and a 110% increase of unsheltered households; and

108  
109           **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report also states that people sleeping in interim  
110 housing facilities (transitional housing or emergency shelters) have better access to opportunities  
111 that can lead to long-term health improvement and housing stability when compared to households  
112 that are unsheltered; and

113  
114           **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report identifies resources in shelters including  
115 hygiene facilities, healthy food and clean drinking water, connections to medical care, and often a  
116 place to safely store belongings; and

117  
118           **WHEREAS**, as noted in WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report, outreach professionals concur that  
119 the likely reason for the increase in unsheltered individuals is that homelessness is increasing, and  
120 available shelters are near or at capacity, or do not offer the services in a way that will meet the  
121 individuals’ needs; and

122  
123           **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report suggests that homelessness  
124 disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); and

125  
126           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report and the 2021 U.S. Census,  
127 people identifying as Hispanic or Latino accounted for 10% of Whatcom County’s population and  
128 14% of respondents in the 2023 PIT count; people identifying as Black, African American, or  
129 African accounted for 1% of Whatcom County’s population and 4% of respondents in the 2023 PIT  
130 count; and people identifying as Native American or Alaska Native accounted for 3% of Whatcom  
131 County’s population and 10% of respondents in the 2023 PIT count; and

132  
133           **WHEREAS**, few surveys were conducted across Lummi Nation, and surveys were not  
134 conducted on site with the Nooksack Tribe in 2023, which suggests an undercount of Native  
135 Americans experiencing homelessness; and

136  
137           **WHEREAS**, previous WCCEH annual reports note that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,  
138 and queer (LGBTQ+) homeless youth make up a disproportionate number of the overall homeless  
139 youth population across Whatcom County and the nation; and

140  
141           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report, of the 836 respondents  
142 surveyed for disability, 58 or 67% reported having one or more disabilities, including mental  
143 illness (49%), chronic substance use (34%), chronic illness (33%), permanent physical (28%), and  
144 developmental (13%); and

145  
146           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2022 and 2023 annual reports, veteran  
147 homelessness increased from 46 homeless veteran households in 2022 to 60 homeless veteran  
148 households in 2023; and

149  
150           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report, children under 10 years old  
151 accounted for 8% of all identified homeless individuals, and another 7% of individuals were  
152 between 10 and 17 years old;

153

154           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report, 159 homeless children under  
155 the age of 18 were counted, making up 15% of the total individuals or around 1 in 7 of the  
156 respondents; and

157  
158           **WHEREAS**, in 2004, the U.S. Department of Education began requiring states to report  
159 data on homeless students in local school districts as part of their Consolidated State Performance  
160 Report; and

161  
162           **WHEREAS**, in contrast to the PIT count, these reports include cumulative data over the  
163 course of a school year and count students that are homeless as well as students living with  
164 another family to avoid homelessness and households residing in a hotel or motel that is paid with  
165 private funding; and

166  
167           **WHEREAS**, in the 2021-2022 school year, 1,223 students, or 4.3% of the total student  
168 population, experienced homelessness in Whatcom County; and

169  
170           **WHEREAS**, 56% of students experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County are students  
171 of color; and

172  
173           **WHEREAS**, 65% of students experiencing homelessness were doubled-up with another  
174 family, 11% stayed in hotels or motels, 14% slept in shelters, and 9% were unsheltered; and

175  
176           **WHEREAS**, students who are housed in Whatcom County have over double proficiency  
177 rates in English Language Arts and Mathematics and a 30% greater graduation rate than students  
178 that are unhoused; and

179  
180           **WHEREAS**, student homelessness exists across Whatcom County school districts, and in the  
181 2021-2022 school year:

- 182           • Bellingham School District reported 523 homeless students (4.3% of student population)
- 183           • Lynden School District reported 88 homeless students (2.5% of student population)
- 184           • Mount Baker School District reported 126 homeless students (6.9% of student population)
- 185           • Nooksack Valley School District reported 240 homeless students (12.4% of student  
186 population)
- 187           • Blaine School District reported 46 homeless students (2% of student population)
- 188           • Ferndale School District reported 151 homeless students (3.2% of student population)
- 189           • Meridian School District reported 49 homeless students (2.7% of student population); and

190  
191           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH’s 2023 Annual Report, 7% of homeless individuals  
192 were aged 18-24 (74 young adults) and 15% of homeless individuals were under the age of 18  
193 (159 youth) in 2023; and

194  
195           **WHEREAS**, Northwest Youth Services served 1,205 youth in Whatcom and Skagit counties  
196 in 2023 in an effort to help young people learn and practice the tools that will help them get and  
197 stay out of the cycle of homelessness; and

198  
199           **WHEREAS**, Point Source Youth (PSY), a national nonprofit organization committed to youth  
200 interventions to end the youth homelessness crisis, deploys solutions including rapid re-housing,  
201 host homes, direct cast transfers, and family and kinship strengthening programs, all of which are  
202 grounded in youth choice, independence, supportive wrap-around services, and the housing-first  
203 principle; and

204

205           **WHEREAS**, in February 2022, A Way Home Washington and Washington State Department  
206 of Commerce, with the help of many contributors that included young people with lived  
207 experiences, released "Yes to Yes" Washington State: Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult  
208 Homelessness Landscape Scan; and  
209

210           **WHEREAS**, the "Yes to Yes" report found that there has been increased action on  
211 preventing youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness including flexible fund diversion programs in  
212 ten counties, a statewide prevention strategy created by young people with lived experience, the  
213 Office of Homeless Youth, and partners, and investments in preventing exits from public systems of  
214 care into homelessness; and  
215

216           **WHEREAS**, the "Yes to Yes" report also identified gaps that still exist including  
217 disproportionality of homeless youth that are BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or disabled, lack of resources for  
218 pregnant/parenting individuals and individuals struggling with mental health and substance use,  
219 lack of access to basic needs including transportation, food, and YYA-specific shelter and housing,  
220 and insufficient government funding, equity strategies, and real-time data; and  
221

222           **WHEREAS**, based on the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, of the 850 households experiencing  
223 homelessness counted, 752 (88%) were unaccompanied (single) persons, 87 (10%) were families  
224 with children, and 11 (1%) were family households without children; and  
225

226           **WHEREAS**, the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report states it is probable that the 87 households  
227 with children represents a significant undercount because Housing Pool data indicates many eligible  
228 families were waiting for services in January, though they were unreachable when surveys were  
229 conducted; and  
230

231           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 6% of single parent households,  
232 13% of two parent households, 36% of adult-only households, and 42% of unaccompanied persons  
233 remain unsheltered; and  
234

235           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, 164 seniors over the age of 60  
236 were surveyed in the 2023 PIT, representing 15% of total respondents; and  
237

238           **WHEREAS**, according to the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, since 2019 senior homelessness  
239 measured in the PIT counts has increased by 141% and the percentage of seniors among those  
240 surveyed increased by 50%; and  
241

242           **WHEREAS**, as noted in the WCCEH's 2023 Annual Report, individuals experiencing  
243 homelessness over the age of 50 are more frequently experiencing health complications normally  
244 found in populations over the age of 70 due to the difficult conditions they endure while unhoused;  
245 and  
246

247           **WHEREAS**, the 2024 PIT count was completed on January 26, 2024, and results are  
248 expected to be released in summer 2024 in WCCEH's 2024 Annual Report; and  
249

250           **WHEREAS**, in 2023, the Big Lift was drafted by a coalition of concerned community  
251 leaders advocating for cooperation between the community and local governments to assess and  
252 address the homelessness crisis through a holistic sheltering, services, and transitional housing  
253 program leveraged heavily on the value of tiny home villages and promotion of supportive  
254 legislation; and  
255

256 **WHEREAS**, over the last few years, the Whatcom County Council has passed multiple  
257 ordinances and resolutions supporting policies that aim to improve housing availability and  
258 affordability, reduce risk of homelessness, and provide services to those most in need; and  
259

260 **WHEREAS**, on May 22, 2018, The Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance 2018-030  
261 establishing the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee to advise the  
262 County Council and Executive on critical issues impacting the business community; and  
263

264 **WHEREAS**, studies show that in order to end homelessness, individuals need to be  
265 connected to services such as employment and trade skills; and  
266

267 **WHEREAS**, the business and labor community can play a pivotal role in assisting  
268 unhoused individuals by offering employment, training, and apprenticeships; and  
269

270 **WHEREAS**, in November 2022, Proposition 5, the Healthy Children's Fund, was approved  
271 by voters in Whatcom County and established a dedicated property tax for 10 years as outlined in  
272 Ordinance 2022-045; and  
273

274 **WHEREAS**, on March 21, 2023, the Whatcom County Council passed Resolution 2023-007  
275 approving the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan, which outlines goals and strategies  
276 to increase early childhood well-being with one focus area being preventing and reducing the  
277 trauma of homelessness; and  
278

279 **WHEREAS**, the Healthy Children's Fund is a critical local funding source for supporting  
280 children and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness and providing more safe housing  
281 options; and  
282

283 **WHEREAS**, investing in shelter and housing for families with children can help prevent  
284 adverse childhood experiences and end generational homelessness; and  
285

286 **WHEREAS**, on July 11, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved Ordinance 2023-039  
287 providing for submission of a proposition to the qualified electors of Whatcom County pursuant to  
288 RCW 82.14.450 authorizing the collection of a local sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent  
289 for the purpose of providing funds for costs associated with public health, safety and justice  
290 facilities and services, including behavioral health, supportive housing, public safety, and criminal  
291 justice facilities and programs; and  
292

293 **WHEREAS**, Ordinance 2023-039 adopted the Justice Project Needs Assessment  
294 Implementation Plan, which identifies five strategies and 15 projects for transforming the criminal  
295 legal and behavioral health systems in Whatcom County and ensuring the provision of adequate  
296 facilities, staffing, resources, and services at all points of contact between the community and  
297 these systems; and  
298

299 **WHEREAS**, the Justice Project Needs Assessment Implementation Plan acknowledged a  
300 lack of adequate housing for people with behavioral health issues as a problem in Whatcom  
301 County; and  
302

303 **WHEREAS**, Project 12 in the Justice Project Needs Assessment Implementation Plan is to  
304 maintain and expand supportive housing programs for people with behavioral health issues and a  
305 history of incarceration, as clinical support and intensive case management services have been  
306 shown to increase housing stability, reduce involvement with the criminal legal system, and  
307 decrease use of emergency medical services; and  
308

309           **WHEREAS**, among the identified key next steps is to provide capital and operating funding  
310 for small recovery/supportive housing and shelters; and

311  
312           **WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2023-  
313 020 declaring affordable housing and homelessness a public health crisis; and

314  
315           **WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that the Executive and county staff from all  
316 relevant departments take a more holistic, system-wide approach to addressing homelessness and  
317 housing affordability and availability at all income levels, and bring forward ideas for how the  
318 County can take more proactive, effective, and decisive action; and

319  
320           **WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that Whatcom County increase its  
321 coordination, collaboration, and advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels to prioritize  
322 addressing the housing affordability and homelessness crisis; and

323  
324           **WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-020 also requests that the Housing Advisory Committee of  
325 Whatcom County and/or county staff provide a progress report to Council before the end of 2023  
326 on the status of the HSW recommendations; and

327  
328           **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County is currently undergoing an update to its Comprehensive Plan  
329 due by December 2025; and

330  
331           **WHEREAS**, on August 9, 2022, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2022-036  
332 establishing priorities for Whatcom County’s 2025 Comprehensive Plan update; and

333  
334           **WHEREAS**, one of the priorities outlined in the Resolution is to collaboratively work toward  
335 economic security and affordable housing without sacrificing environmental health and public  
336 safety; and

337  
338           **WHEREAS**, in alignment with changes to the Growth Management Act (GMA) instituted by  
339 House Bill 1220, Resolution 2022-036 requests that the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update include a  
340 goal that everyone, at every income level, has access to affordable housing, as defined by a  
341 household spending 30% or less of its income on housing costs; and

342  
343           **WHEREAS**, possible implementation strategies and actions that could help accomplish the  
344 housing priorities listed in this resolution include, but are not limited to:

- 345           • Specific goals and policies to ensure housing development meets current and future  
346 housing, equity, climate, and economic needs;  
347           • Ensure adequate housing and services for seniors and people with disabilities - services to  
348 include housing support, assistance with daily living, transportation, recreation, accessing  
349 healthcare, and assistance at a person-centered level;  
350           • Provide a full range of affordable housing types ranging from multifamily apartments,  
351 condos, and duplexes to detached single family homes, ADU’s, and tiny homes; and

352  
353           **WHEREAS**, 2025 Comprehensive Plan should include more specific consideration of  
354 recommendations addressing homelessness and shelter capacity and related zoning and land use  
355 policies and regulations; and

356  
357           **WHEREAS**, the City of Bellingham estimates that less than 30% of Whatcom County  
358 housing is affordable to a household earning the median family income; and

359

360           **WHEREAS**, in 2023 Washington State Department of Commerce projected Whatcom County  
361 will need to build 34,377 new homes by the year 2044, 18,053 of which need to be affordable to  
362 households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income; and  
363

364           **WHEREAS**, on October 24, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2023-  
365 043 supporting the use of Economic Development Investment (EDI) funds for affordable housing;  
366 and

367           **WHEREAS**, on April 9, 2024, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2024-017  
368 recognizing the fentanyl crisis as an emergency in Whatcom County and identifying approaches to  
369 the emergency; and  
370

371           **WHEREAS**, Resolution 2024-017 recognizes that involuntary displacement of people  
372 experiencing homelessness is estimated to worsen overdose and hospitalizations, decrease  
373 initiations of medications for opioid use disorder, and contribute to deaths among people  
374 experiencing homelessness; and  
375

376           **WHEREAS**, on April 10, 2024, the Whatcom County Executive issued Executive Order  
377 2024-02 addressing fentanyl in Whatcom County; and  
378

379           **WHEREAS**, Executive Order 2024-02 requests WCHCS prepare and submit to the  
380 Executive, in coordination with the Department of Emergency Management, a 24-month  
381 emergency response plan, staffing requests, and budget proposal to operationalize the order's  
382 actions to address the Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Aftercare/Recovery (PITA) needs  
383 of the Whatcom County community; and  
384

385           **WHEREAS**, on May 30, 2024, WCHCS completed the Operations Plan for Fentanyl Executive  
386 Order; and  
387

388           **WHEREAS**, strategy 1e of this Operations Plan is to implement strategies to reduce the  
389 number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and mitigate the individual and public  
390 health impacts of encampments; and  
391

392           **WHEREAS**, shelter is often an initial entry point for the homeless community to gain access  
393 to services including treatment for chronic substance use, mental illness, and other health issues;  
394 and

395           **WHEREAS**, in discussion of the Operations Plan and councilmember priorities during a  
396 Council Committee of the Whole meeting on June 18, 2024, multiple councilmembers expressed  
397 interest in supporting recovery shelter and housing; and  
398

399           **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County often partners with the City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale,  
400 and other local jurisdictions and agencies to fund and support homeless shelters; and  
401

402           **WHEREAS**, on October 24, 2023, Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham entered into  
403 an interlocal agreement to jointly fund a winter shelter located at 1355 Civic Field Way in  
404 Bellingham from December 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024 operated by Road2Home, a  
405 nonprofit serving community members experiencing homelessness; and  
406

407           **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County agreed to pay half of the costs of the Road2Home winter  
408 shelter, not to exceed \$250,000, with funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); and  
409

410           **WHEREAS**, the City of Bellingham agreed to pay Road2Home \$500,000 (of which \$306,000  
411 are federal funds) to operate the Road2Home winter shelter (see Contract C2301393); and  
412

413           **WHEREAS**, the Road2Home winter shelter at Civic Field Way operated every day from 7:00  
414 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and provided space for up to 45 guests, with the possibility for additional  
415 capacity during severe weather; and  
416

417           **WHEREAS**, in summer 2023, Whatcom County staff published a request for proposals  
418 seeking a qualified provider to run a temperature dependent severe weather shelter for the 2023-  
419 24 winter season; and  
420

421           **WHEREAS**, Ferndale Community Services was the only respondent interested in operating a  
422 temperature dependent shelter and entered into a contract with Whatcom County to operate a  
423 severe weather shelter for the 2023-24 winter season with funding from ARPA; and  
424

425           **WHEREAS**, Road2Home and YWCA responded to provide nightly winter shelter and entered  
426 into a contract with Whatcom County to operate nightly with funding from ARPA; and  
427

428           **WHEREAS**, no other applications were received and Whatcom County was unable to identify  
429 a willing and available partner to provide a severe weather shelter service within Bellingham city  
430 limits; and  
431

432           **WHEREAS**, WCHCS staff recognized the need for additional capacity for shelter over the  
433 2023-24 winter season, so they took on the responsibility of planning and operating a severe  
434 weather shelter funded by Whatcom County; and  
435

436           **WHEREAS**, WCHCS staff:

- 437           • Located, acquired, and equipped a location to operate a shelter from November 1, 2023
- 438           through March 14, 2024,
- 439           • Recruited and trained on-call volunteers and temporary paid staff to support operations, and
- 440           • Operated overnight (5pm to 8am) when forecasted conditions met previously established
- 441           Severe Weather Shelters Guiding Assumptions ( $\leq 28^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and sufficient staffing was available;
- 442           and  
443

444           **WHEREAS**, the WCHCS' Winter 2023-24 Severe Weather Shelter After Action Report was  
445 published on May 23, 2024 and presented to Council on June 4, 2024; and  
446

447           **WHEREAS**, the county-run severe weather shelter, located at 810 N. State Street in  
448 Bellingham, was open for a total of 20 nights and served 197 clients for a total of 947 bed nights,  
449 averaging 47 people per night; and  
450

451           **WHEREAS**, the planned capacity of the county-run severe weather shelter was 45, but  
452 during particularly cold nights, the shelter exceeded that capacity, with the highest number of  
453 clients served in one night totaling 69; and  
454

455           **WHEREAS**, the nightly winter low barrier shelter operated by Road2Home reached or  
456 exceeded capacity (45 people) 87% of the nights they operated this winter, and reported guests  
457 would begin lining up outside in hopes of acquiring a space for the night as many as 3-4 hours prior  
458 to opening; and  
459

460           **WHEREAS**, Road2Home counted an average of 25 to 30 guests who were turned away on  
461 nights when Whatcom County’s severe weather shelter was closed compared with an average of 8  
462 guests on nights when the severe weather shelter was open; and  
463

464           **WHEREAS**, these numbers likely represent an undercounting of individuals seeking  
465 overnight sheltering, as severe weather shelter guests shared anecdotally that word spread quickly  
466 among the unsheltered population as to when the line queuing at Road2Home’s nightly shelter had  
467 reached capacity; and  
468

469           **WHEREAS**, the After Action Report identified strengths and areas for improvement for five  
470 main objectives:

- 471           • Operationalize a facility to serve as a Severe Weather Shelter (SWS)
- 472           • Recruit, train, and schedule staff to safely operate the SWS
- 473           • Activate the SWS based on established temperature and weather-based criteria
- 474           • Communicate SWS operational status to partner agencies and public at least 48  
475           hours before activation
- 476           • Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers, and guests; and  
477

478           **WHEREAS**, among the identified strengths were that the Response System Division staff  
479 (including Ground Response and Coordinated Entry, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, and  
480 Alternative Response Team) were able to make prolonged connections with regular clientele during  
481 severe weather shelter operations; and  
482

483           **WHEREAS**, the After Action Report included four main recommendations moving forward:

- 484           1. Prioritize additional nightly sheltering capacity during the coldest months instead of  
485           sporadic, criteria-based severe weather sheltering
- 486           2. Expand both length of winter sheltering “season” and hours of operation
- 487           3. Utilize a dedicated, single purpose location with sufficient capacity, necessary  
488           amenities, and within proximity to other community services
- 489           4. Identify a contracted provider OR establish dedicated WCHCS positions to operate  
490           and manage a nightly winter shelter as described above in the above  
491           recommendations; and  
492

493           **WHEREAS**, the total cost for this severe weather shelter was \$403,598, for an average of  
494 \$426 per guest served per night; and  
495

496           **WHEREAS**, WCHCS’ After Action Report presentation provides the following cost  
497 comparison of various interventions:

- 498           • The average cost of an uninsured overnight hospital stay is \$9,300, while an  
499           uninsured daytime visit is \$2,607
- 500           • The median annual cost of a motel/hotel room in Whatcom County is \$48,000
- 501           • The average annual cost of a single bed in the Whatcom County jail is \$45,000
- 502           • The average cost of a bed per year in 2022 at 22 North is \$25,000
- 503           • The average estimated annual cost of one Tiny Home at Gardenview is \$15,000
- 504           • The average annual cost for a bed in federal prison is \$35,347
- 505           • The median annual PSH unit cost is \$13,349.31, fluctuating depending on population  
506           level and program size
- 507           • The median annual cost of a single night by night shelter bed in Washington State is  
508           \$13,421.05
- 509           • The estimated annual cost of a single bed in a county-run low barrier shelter is  
510           \$24,000; and  
511

512           **WHEREAS**, shelter is a more cost-effective form of intervention compared to a night in a  
513 hospital, motel, Whatcom County jail, and federal prison; and

514  
515           **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County now has experience operating a shelter; and

516  
517           **WHEREAS**, on April 8, 2024, Bellingham City Council approved the purchase of a property  
518 at 3300 Northwest Avenue to be used as the new location for a tiny home village to replace two  
519 existing villages, Swift Haven (25 beds) and Unity Village (23 beds) operated by HomesNOW!; and

520  
521           **WHEREAS**, the new North Haven tiny home village will be operated by HomesNOW! and  
522 could be ready for 48 guests by late 2024 pending Temporary Shelter Permit approval; and

523  
524           **WHEREAS**, HomesNOW! has expressed interest and ability to expand tiny home shelter  
525 capacity; and

526  
527           **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries operates Base Camp, a low barrier 24-hour  
528 reservation-based shelter that provides a safe place for up to 200 adults to stay; and

529  
530           **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries reported that in a matter of a few weeks they had  
531 to turn away 20+ families due to lack of capacity; and

532  
533           **WHEREAS**, Lighthouse Mission Ministries will replace the current 200-bed Base Camp  
534 shelter with a new 300-bed shelter later this year at 910 W. Holly Street with the potential for an  
535 additional 100 beds during extreme weather; and

536  
537           **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County also provides funding to support shelters with Domestic  
538 Violence and Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County, Northwest Youth Services PAD Program,  
539 Opportunity Council, Lydia Place Motel Program for families with children, YWCA, and Sun House;  
540 and

541  
542           **WHEREAS**, the hard work of dedicated staff from these shelters and others have prevented  
543 hundreds of people from having no other option than to sleep outside; and

544  
545           **WHEREAS**, the County and community partners have increased shelter beds over the last  
546 few years, but demand continues to outpace the supply, and the need to expand year-round  
547 shelter capacity continues to exist; and

548  
549           **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Council acts as the Whatcom County Health Board to  
550 enact local rules and regulations as are necessary to preserve, promote, and improve public health  
551 and make recommendations to the Whatcom County Executive on matters affecting public health in  
552 our community; and

553  
554           **WHEREAS**, functional zero homelessness is a milestone that indicates a community has  
555 measurably solved homelessness, meaning that when homelessness occurs it is rare and brief; and

556  
557           **WHEREAS**, to achieve functional zero, the Whatcom County community must increase  
558 whole system capacity and availability of shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive  
559 housing, affordable housing, attainable market rate housing, behavioral health and substance use  
560 treatment, and social services.

561  
562           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council declares a goal to  
563 achieve and maintain functional zero homelessness within ten years; and

564  
565 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council supports the expansion of  
566 year-round shelter capacity in our community, including but not limited to operating a county-  
567 managed year-round shelter and supporting tiny home villages, especially for vulnerable and  
568 overburdened communities at risk of housing insecurity and homelessness; and  
569

570 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council recognizes the opportunity  
571 to end youth and young adult homelessness in Whatcom County and supports the establishment of  
572 shelter for families with children, unaccompanied minors, and young adults (18-25); and  
573

574 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council requests the County  
575 Executive to:

- 576 1. Prepare a proposal in consultation with the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee  
577 to expand capacity for year-round shelters through a variety of methods and other  
578 preferred approaches as recommended by the County Executive.
  - 579 a. Consider different types of shelters including county-managed, congregate, tiny  
580 homes, pallet shelters, urban camping zones, safe parking, and low barrier.
  - 581 b. Consider population specific shelter including for families with children,  
582 unaccompanied minors, and young adults (18-25).
  - 583 c. Determine if a temperature dependent shelter or a nightly winter shelter is  
584 operationally preferable. If recommendation is continuing to contract/operate a  
585 temperature dependent severe weather shelter, evaluate the temperature threshold  
586 required for opening the severe weather shelter.
  - 587 d. Use the Homeless Strategies Workgroup recommendations and action steps to  
588 inform proposal for expanding shelter capacity.
  - 589 e. Include budget impact analysis that outlines costs, staff time, funding sources, and  
590 other necessary considerations.
- 591 2. Explore options to coordinate, collaborate, and cost share increasing shelter capacity with all  
592 seven cities in Whatcom County, other local, state, federal, and tribal jurisdictions, and  
593 community partners.
- 594 3. Identify strategies to support building nonprofit provider capacity.
- 595 4. Explore Whatcom County owned properties and future land acquisitions for expanded  
596 shelter and housing capacity.
- 597 5. Identify a provider who will ensure adequate winter sheltering for the 2024-25 winter  
598 season. If no provider is available, then establish a plan for Whatcom County to operate.
- 599 6. Contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of Whatcom County's  
600 coordinated entry system in coordination with the WCHCS, other organizational homeless  
601 and housing service providers, and community members with lived experience.
- 602 7. Provide a road map for how to achieve functional zero in ten years with annual progress  
603 reports.
- 604 8. Create a plan to do community outreach to locations where unsheltered community  
605 members reside.
- 606 9. Create a training and employment program supporting unhoused community members, in  
607 partnership with the business and labor community; and  
608

609 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the shelter options and budget impacts be provided to  
610 the Whatcom County Council for review and consideration by September 30, 2024 to ensure  
611 adequate time to include funding in the 2025-26 biennial budget; and  
612

613 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council respectfully requests that  
614 the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee (WCHAC):

- 615 1. Create a short-term subcommittee that sunsets December 31, 2025 to issue shelter  
616 recommendations with the following specifications:
- 617 • The subcommittee, led by the WCHAC Chair, shall include Housing Advisory  
618 Committee member and nonmember participation including those with lived  
619 experiences.
  - 620 • Review and provide feedback on the County Executive’s proposal for expanding  
621 year-round shelter capacity, funding sources, staff needs, and possible locations  
622 (including lands currently owned by county or those available for purchase).
  - 623 • The subcommittee should recruit additional expertise, as needed, to meet the  
624 deliverables and scope.
- 625 2. Provide recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan specifically addressing  
626 homelessness and shelter capacity and related zoning and land use policies and  
627 regulations.
- 628 3. Review and provide input and direction on the county’s upcoming 2024 Plan to End  
629 Homelessness; and  
630

631 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council request council staff support  
632 in exploring options for establishing an independent, quasi-governmental entity dedicated to  
633 housing and homeless issues; and  
634


635 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council supports any efforts by the  
636 cities of Whatcom County, in addition to County activities, to increase shelter capacity, including  
637 but not limited to the implementation of safe parking sites, relocation and expansion of tiny home  
638 villages, and the operation of severe weather shelter.  
639

640  
641 **APPROVED** this 23rd day of July, 2024.

642  
643  
644  
645 ATTEST:

646  
647  
648   
649 Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

650  
651  
652   
653 Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

654 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

655 George Roche via email 7/16/2024  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

*Equity – Collaboration – Compassion – Transparency – Innovation - Service*

### Leadership:

#### Health Director

Erika has focused on a few key areas over the last few months and will continue to do so into the summer and fall. Namely, launching and implementing the Fentanyl Operations Plan, overseeing and communicating about the Healthy Children's Fund expenditures and projects, planning for biennial budget, developing organizational and position changes to better meet needs, planning for building acquisition and financing, structuring of a more effective Public Health Advisory Board, and planning for severe weather for vulnerable populations.

In terms of public facing activities, Erika continues to maintain and build relationships with outside service providers, provide public presentations on Justice Project, Healthy Children's Fund, and Fentanyl Operations Plan activities and goals, and leadership for the Funders' Roundtable with local philanthropy. She transitioned her role of Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials (WSALPHO) President and now serves as the Past President until June 2025. Erika continues to serve on the Board of National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO).

#### Health Officer

Dr. Harley continues to support the Communicable Disease division, focusing particularly on the Tuberculosis Program. With the rise in pre-immigration screening for latent TB infection, the TB nurses are managing an increasing number of reports for individuals potentially at risk of developing active TB disease. These new arrivals to the U.S. require risk assessments, care coordination, and connections to preventive treatment. Additionally, within the CD&E division, developing the department's capacity for comprehensive health screening for refugees is a goal.

She collaborates closely with community health staff, offering health expertise, connecting staff to community healthcare partners, and helping design health education events. Strengthening connections and collaboration between public health and healthcare organizations and providers remains a key priority.

In light of Dr. Thompson's departure from the department at the end of June, Dr. Harley is stepping up to advise on epidemiology and informatics within the Health Information and Assessment team. Another critical area of focus following Dr. Thompson's exit is

opioid response work, especially regarding improving access to Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) in our community, as well as substance use prevention and education initiatives. We will soon bring on Dr. Shannon Boustead on a temporary basis to provide expertise and coordination on MOUD expansion and healthcare community connection.

### **Communicable Disease and Epidemiology (CD&E):**

The CD&E division's public health nurses and staff within the CD&E division continue clinical service outreach and educational events in the community.

**Avian Influenza Internal Task Force:** Avian influenza (bird flu) is a disease caused by infection with avian (bird) influenza (flu) Type A viruses. These viruses occur naturally in wild aquatic birds. These viruses can also infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and other bird species, as well as wildlife and domestic animals. There has now been spread among dairy cattle herds in multiple states, but none identified in Washington. With the assistance of Dr. Amy Harley, we have established an internal department task force that consists of our communicable disease staff, environmental health, communications, and emergency preparedness. This task force meets regularly to share information and discuss our response should an outbreak among dairy farm workers occur.

**Refugee Health Screenings:** With the assistance of Dr. Amy Harley, we are working with the Department of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services to offer Refugee Health Screenings in Whatcom County. Refugees who resettle in Whatcom County must travel to Snohomish County for Refugee Health Screenings. Offering this service locally can reduce barriers for refugees seeking health services. Reducing barriers to healthcare access for this population is vital for infectious disease surveillance in the community. We are developing the internal capacity to provide this much-needed service in the community.

**Increasing Community Naloxone Access:** A naloxone box pilot project is currently underway based on a recommendation from the Syringe Services Program public health nurses. To increase the access and availability of naloxone and overdose prevention supplies, WCHCS has purchased nine Naloxone boxes to be placed strategically at various locations throughout Whatcom County. Working closely with community partners, the project aims to ensure inclusion and access to supplies, such as naloxone, for those facing the most significant barriers to accessing care. Limited hours, lack of transportation, and stigma create substantial barriers to the populations that benefit from accessing naloxone.

**Girard Vending Machine Kiosk:** Federal funding for free COVID-19 testing is ending, and there will be limited access to free testing. As a result, In March 2024, The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) launched a program with Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) and Tribal Nations to improve public health. These kiosks offer free COVID-19 tests. This program aims to support underserved communities and those most affected by health issues. There are two types of tests available in the machine: a rapid antigen test and a PCR test which requires the specimen to be sent out to a lab for testing. The machine is restocked regularly by the vendor, LTS. This program is expected to last until December 2024.

**Infection Prevention Team Achievement:** Public health nurses in the Infection Prevention Team were awarded a certificate of achievement for their exemplary contribution and commitment to the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in Whatcom County long-term care facilities.

### **Community and Organizational Development (COD):**

**Whatcom Community Health Insights- launches July 15th:** This data platform provides public health data and information with over 120 health indicators on the well-being of Whatcom County's residents with a focus on health equity.

**Core Competency Assessment:** The Workforce Development team, with support from our Evaluator, conducted a Public Health Core Competency self-assessment. These competencies encompass the essential knowledge and skills required for public health practice, as defined by the 10 Essential Public Health Services. Findings show staff assessed themselves as highly proficient in communication, health equity, and community partnerships, while areas for growth include data and assessment, policy and planning, and public health science. Results will be used to plan for training and professional development for the department.

**Extreme Heat & Wildfire Smoke Preparedness Plan:** As summer months bring warmer weather, staff worked across divisions to prepare the resources and plans for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke. The plans focus on direct services, DIY mitigation strategies, public information, education, and community outreach activities as well as suggested thresholds for response activation.

**Healthy Children's Fund Evaluation Plan complete:** WCHCS recently contracted with VillageReach to develop a comprehensive Evaluation Plan to monitor and assess Healthy Children's Fund activities and its impact on the community in early learning & care as well as supporting vulnerable families. The evaluation aligns with the implementation plan and provides guidance for an internal process evaluation as well as evaluation of the ten strategies of HCF.

**WCHCS is participating in PH WINS:** WCHCS will participate in the national 2024 PH WINS (Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey) this September. The web-based survey asks questions on workplace culture and morale, satisfaction, and training needs, as well as demographic characteristics. PH WINS 2024 will shape investments in our workforce nationally and unite public health practitioners and researchers around the public health workforce development agenda for state and local government public health workers.

### **Community Health and Human Services (CH&HS):**

**Severe Weather Shelter After Action Report (AAR):** The Homeless Housing Team presented the AAR to the County Council in June. The recommendations from the report as well as some cost projections for operating more shelters in the community, have added to the conversation Council members are already having around a shelter resolution that is on the table. The Whatcom Housing Advisory Committee has provided feedback on what a possible sub-committee to dive deeper into the topic might look like for the County Council if the resolution is passed. Response to climate related events for those who are unhoused is quite a bit of the focus for the housing team now as they move into the smoke and heat season of summer.

**Community Provider Trainings:** CH&HS continues to partner with the Response Systems Division on a four part training series this year, with the most recent training in June. The focus was on suicide prevention and with 50 registered attendees who work in housing and behavioral health programs. The response has been very positive, with a desire for more learning opportunities like this. The next training is in September and will focus on Brain Science Addiction & Recovery.

**Healthy Children's Fund:** Programs funded through Healthy Children's Fund are now moving forward! Most recently, two new contracts were signed that offer a significant step towards improving the well-being of parents and children navigating the most formative time in their lives. The Mobile Mama Therapy program will now have additional master level interns available to provide mental health support to mothers on their parenting journey, and most of the 11 contracts for doula services have now been signed. Medicaid eligible families will now have increased access to programs like these throughout Whatcom County.

**Teletherapy for Students, Teachers, and Staff at all School Districts:** Youth experiencing mental health challenges, as well as poor access to healthcare in some parts of the county, prompted Council to approve School age children throughout

Whatcom County are also receiving some new opportunities to improve their health in the form of teletherapy services for each district. The students served will be those who don't have access to mental and behavioral health services due to language differences, inability to get to appointments, or lack of appropriate therapists to make a good match. The goal is to provide up to 1100 clinical therapy sessions throughout Whatcom County. Whatcom County is also helping to facilitate state funding to support a rural school based health center with the Mt. Baker School District. This SBHC is strongly supported by the school district with the goal of making access to health care more available in east county. SeaMar and the community's efforts are moving along with the hope to be able to provide sports physicals for youth prior to the 2024-25 school year.

**Housing for People with Developmental Disabilities:** The Developmental Disabilities Team is in the early stages of working with a local housing provider to make sure there are some local DD funds in the development of housing units that could support those with diagnosed DD. This would help keep the units affordable for the individuals living there and continue to support the mission of community inclusion by having some units focused on DD amongst the larger building.

#### **Environmental Health (EH):**

**Climate Vulnerability Assessment on Wildfire Smoke and Extreme Heat:** The BRASH (Building Resilient Against Smoke and Heat) assessment was presented to Council on June 18. The various social, economic, occupations and physiological factors that influence susceptibility to wildfire smoke and extreme heat were discussed along with the eight communities in the County that experience higher vulnerability to these two emerging climate hazards. The StoryMap of this project can be accessed here: [tinyurl.com/whatcomBRASH](https://tinyurl.com/whatcomBRASH)

**DIY Air Cleaner Distribution:** With the support of Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA), EH was able to fund over 100 Do-It-Yourself (DIY) air cleaner kits. In partnership with several community organizations, distribution amongst frontline communities will occur this summer to support cleaner indoor air during wildfire season.

**EPA Award for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the Foothills Region Through Creative Food Recovery "Freedges:"** EH and CH&HS teamed up with WSU Extension and Sustainable Connections on a grant to continue to reduce food waste and enhance food access in East County. The "Freedges" are free, surplus food from restaurants to residents and the approach could be used as a model in rural communities hoping to increase availability of nutritious foods to residents and reduce greenhouse gasses emitted from food waste.

**Shellfish biotoxins, Beach Pollution and Rabies:** Our Food Safety and Living Environment teams have been very busy sampling, investigating and educating our community when it comes to paralytic shellfish poisoning, pollution concerns at our favorite beaches and rabies. Be sure to check health advisories before harvesting shellfish and enjoying a swim at your favorite public beach. Lastly, vaccinate your cats, dogs and bat-proof your homes to decrease the likelihood of a rabies exposure!

**Soil & Water Stewardship: On-Site Septic Community Education:** The EH Onsite team has empowered over 250 community members to steward our soil and water resources through onsite sewage system training from April 2024- July 2024. They also have partnered with Whatcom County Public Works and the WCHCS Communications Team to launch a new online training in addition to our in-person trainings. If you own an onsite septic system please feel welcome to attend a training and learn about your onsite sewage system!

**Technical Assistance Capacity: GIS EH Internal Map:** EH has partnered with Whatcom County GIS to build internal capacity to identify pollution sources and provide technical assistance to community partners such as the Whatcom County Pollution Identification and Control Team, Lummi Nation, Re-Sources, and industry experts. Improving our data infrastructure is a key step towards moving from emergency, reactionary processes to a more coordinated response.

### **Financial Service (FAS):**

**State Year End:** The division has been busy preparing for the June 30th year end as many of our funding sources end June 30th. We also start many contracts on July 1st to correspond to the new funding allocations. This year the division proactively sent out cutoff dates for spending by June 30th and deadlines to start contracts by July 1st. The department followed the timelines which resulted in many of our funding sources being fully spent down and contracts getting prepared and implemented sooner.

**Budget Development:** The department's budget is due August 9th. The FAS team has been meeting with divisions and providing resources to help better prepare the 2025-2026 biennial budget. The department is working hard on aligning anticipated costs with current and future funding sources.

### **Response Systems:**

#### **Leadership positions in RSD:**

In June, we welcomed Hannah Fisk as our new Special Projects Manager. Hannah will be working directly on strategic initiatives including the Justice Project, 23 Hour Crisis Relief Center, Fentanyl Ops Plan as well as continuing to work with existing agencies that are contracted through Health & Community Services to provide Behavioral health services in Whatcom County.

In September, we will be moving forward with an Assistant Manager position to support the Response Systems division programs.

**Therapeutic Campus development at Division Street:**

In addition to the development of the 23 Hour Crisis Relief Center, we are eager to develop additional therapeutic services for the community at the Division Street property. These services could include Medication for Opioid Use Disorder, Resource and transportation services.

**Justice Project:**

Working closely with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office leadership, we are honored to be part of the development team working to improve BH and re-entry services in the jail. This work includes improvements to current operations as well as future planning for the new facility.

**LEAD Program expansion:**

Whatcom LEAD has received additional funds from the Health Care Authority to expand our team by two FTEs. This will allow us to address the current waitlist of folks waiting to get into the program. This will also allow us to continue to focus on the expansion of pre-arrest and pre-charge diversions in partnership with law enforcement and the prosecuting attorney's office.

**Street Medicine program development and expansion:**

We are so excited that the Health & Community Services Street Medicine program continues to develop and provide critical health care services to members of our community. The Street Medicine team of a nurse and nurse practitioner is able to work with community members who struggle to connect to primary care services. The team works closely with outreach teams, housing and shelter providers and the Response Systems programs. We are excited to bring on a part-time outreach staff in the fall to provide additional services to the folks served by this program.

**Supporting the Fentanyl Operations Plan:**

In coordination with the Fentanyl Ops Plan, our team is focused on securing funding for SUD navigation services embedded at St. Joe's hospital, SUD navigation services for

individuals who have recently overdosed and the purchase of recovery supplies.

**Data Sharing Agreements:**

Working closely with our Health Informatics team, we continue to focus on building data sharing agreements with our key partners to analyze the impact of RSD programs.

Before the end of the year, we hope to have these agreements in place with local law enforcement and our hospital.