



# Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date/Time/Location:** 2/8/2024 / 8:30-10:00am / Hybrid: Civic 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room & Zoom

**Committee Members Present:** Adrienne Renz, Ann Beck, Ashley Thomasson, Brien Thane, Dan Dunne, Dawna Morse, Kayla Schott-Bresler (present for update), Mary Lou Steward, Paul Schissler, Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin, Teri Bryant, Von Ochoa

**Committee Members Absent:**, Bruce Bosch, Diana Phair,

**WCHCS Staff/Guest Presenters:** Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Chris D’Onofrio, Eric Chambers, Michaela Mandala / Lucas Clark (PDS)

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	Samya moved that the minutes from the December 2023 meeting be approved, Ann seconded the motion. The committee voted and the motion passed. <b>Yes: 10; No: 0; Abstain: 2</b>
4. 2025 Comprehensive Plan Presentation and Request for Feedback	<p>Lucas Clark from Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) presented an overview of the County’s Comprehensive Plan that is due June 30, 2025. This plan is required by the Growth Management Act. Part of the planning process is to request general recommendations from advisory committees, and this committee is being asked to focus on the housing chapter of the plan. Ideally, recommendations will be submitted by the end of the month, and there will be follow-up later on in the process.</p> <p>The committee reviewed a draft memo with recommendations for the housing chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recommendation was made to keep goals and priorities focused on this committee’s purview, which is low income housing.</li> <li>• According to the Department of Commerce, over half of all units needed in the City of Bellingham are for households at or below 50% of the area median income (35k more housing units by 2045, 18k of which are needed for 50% AMI or below).</li> <li>• A suggestion was made that this committee could weigh in on land use policy as it relates to shelter, homeless facilities, and group homes being allowed in different cities and areas across the county. Meeting the current need and adding the needed number of</li> </ul>



	<p>units is difficult to do if land use policies don't allow for the type of housing and shelter needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A suggestion was made to add in an educational component to make engaging in development more approachable to the community.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made that County staff review the Local Plan to End Homelessness and pull out policies that might be appropriate to adopt into the Consolidated Plan. The City of Bellingham will plan to do the same thing.</li> </ul> <p>The committee will reconvene for a special meeting in March to review and discuss what is missing from the Council's recommendations, to include in an official recommendation.</p>
<p><b>7. Health and Community Services Update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County-run severe weather shelter was open for 9 consecutive nights and 5 days last month. Health and Community Services staff will talk to Council next week, and will come back to this committee once an after-action review has been completed.</li> <li>• A Healthy Children's Fund Request for Proposals (RFP) focused on prevention for families with children has been released. \$2.8 million is available for a year and a half of services. The RFP is open until March 12<sup>th</sup> and the application can be access through the County's bidding website. Over the next few months, there will be a series of RFPs related to the different strategies of the Healthy Children's Fund.</li> <li>• A Small Capital RFP for \$2.6 million received \$3.5 million in requests. All but one application are for rehabilitation projects. Final decisions on which projects will be awarded should be made by the end of next week.</li> <li>• The committee discussed the challenges of accessing state and federal funding for new and existing housing projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Executive's Office Update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bill is moving its way through the legislature that would make clear the allowance for Economic Development Investment (EDI) Funds to be used for nonprofit housing, including land purchases. The bill is currently in the House Rules Committee waiting to get called down to a floor vote.</li> <li>• A small group will be working on program policy development and will be requesting feedback from this committee, the EDI Board, and the Business and Commerce Committee.</li> <li>• Disability Rights Washington is releasing a large RFP for housing for Trueblood class members. The Executive's Office is planning to apply for Whatcom County to be the lead agency is distributing those funds locally and encourage providers to reach out about collaborating if interested or if intending to apply directly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. City of Bellingham Update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of Bellingham's annual notice of funding availability (NOFA) is out right now and responses are due February 22<sup>nd</sup>.</li> <li>• Three agencies have been awarded funding from a Prevention and Diversion NOFA released last fall.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Whatcom Homeless Service Center update</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Today is the last day that surveys are being collected for the annual Point in Time Count. Results will likely be available sometime in May.</li> <li>• Construction continues on the Way Station and a certificate of occupancy is currently expected in October.</li> <li>• A small group working closely with the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance went to Olympia last week to talk to lawmakers. The main topic of discussion was rent stabilization.</li> </ul>





11. New Business	Dan reviewed the committee's bylaws.
12. Public Comment	Public comment was received from two community members.
Adjourn	The meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, March 14, 2024, 8:30-10:00am

