



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: 4/11/2024 / 8:30-10:00am / Hybrid: Civic 1st Floor Conference Room & Zoom

Committee Members Present: Ann Beck, Brien Thane, Dan Dunne, Mary Lou Steward, Paul Schissler, Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin (late arrival), Von Ochoa, Teri Bryant

Committee Members Absent: Adrienne Renz, Ashley Thomasson, Bruce Bosch, Dawna Morse, Diana Phair, Kayla Schott-Bresler

WCHCS Staff/Guest Presenters: Chris D'Onofrio

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. Kayla is not here so Chris will provide a quick legislative update in her place.
3. Approval of Minutes	Brien moved that the minutes from the March 2024 meeting be approved, Ann seconded the motion. The committee voted, but there were not enough yes votes to approve. Yes: 7; No: 0; Abstain: 1
4. Executive's Office/Legislative Update	<p>Economic Development Investment (EDI) Fund legislation passed during session and the Executive's Office is preparing to implement program reform in collaboration with the EDI Board and Council. The Executive's office would also like this committee's input. The clarification that came out of the legislative session is that it can be used for acquisition of land that will be owned by a nonprofit and that nonprofit owned projects are eligible to apply for pre-development.</p> <p>Other notable legislation from the recent session include the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance's push for setting a limit on how much rent can increase each year (did not pass), document recording fee backfill (passed), additional funding for the Housing Trust Fund (passed), and a modification to 1590 to allow homeownership projects if they benefit households at or below 80% of the Area Median Income.</p>
5. Follow-up on Comprehensive Plan Recommendations	Dan reviewed the committee's contributions so far providing recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan Housing Chapter. After the special meeting in March, a memo was submitted to the Executive, and Dan has since met with the Executive's Office. Dan shared his notes from that meeting and committee members further discussed EDI loans, the City of Bellingham's pre-construction loan program, and the smaller cities' challenges around securing land for housing.





<p>6. Point in Time Count Messaging</p>	<p>Teri explained the process for collecting data for the Point in Time Count (PITC), and while the final numbers are not yet confirmed, we are likely going to see the number go down compared to last year. She explained that this does not mean that there is less homelessness, rather it is more likely due various other reasons such as, disenfranchisement and refusal to participate, the exacerbation of the fentanyl crisis, that it's become more difficult to locate people in vehicles due to relocation, and people living outside are dying at higher rates. The Committee talked more about messaging including the importance of looking to other data sources to more comprehensively describe the problem, and describing the local context beside the numbers.</p>
<p>7. Health and Community Services Update</p>	<p>Health and Community Services staff provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award letters for the Small Capital RFP will go out next week. • We will be hiring to backfill Barbara's position after she retired last month. • The County-run severe weather shelter ended operations in mid-March. Of note, 172 unique guests were served at the temperature dependent shelter over 20 nights during the season. An after-action report will be released at a later date.
<p>8. City of Bellingham Update</p>	<p>City of Bellingham staff provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COB and Whatcom County jointly funded another winter season overnight shelter (not temperature dependent). The total cost was about \$530k over three months and the program served 307 unique guests. • COB is purchasing a site on Northwest Ave. where both Homes Now locations will relocate to hopefully by the end of this year. • The City's Annual HUD Action Plan draft is published and the public comment period ends today. Tonight, the Community Development Advisory Board will meet to make their recommendations. • HUD has a new funding source to support manufactured home parks, and the Department of Commerce is hosting a meeting on April 15th at 10:00am to discuss how the state will respond. • Samya recommended a podcast called "Lost Patients," which provides an in-depth review of our mental health system over the past 50-70 years. • The Planning and Community Development division is going through a lot of transition with 4 out of 8 people leaving/retiring. In the next few weeks, there will be job opening posted for the Home Rehabilitation program.
<p>9. Whatcom Homeless Service Center Update</p>	<p>Teri provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Whatcom Homeless Service Center has an open position on the Homeless Outreach Team. • HOT continues to provide showers Friday, Saturday, and Sunday behind City Hall. • Things are moving along with the Way Station. • The Coordinated Entry system is stretched thin while trying to respond to the demand for service in the community.
<p>10. New Business</p>	<p>Dan: Councilmember Buchanan asked for an update on the Homeless Strategies Workgroup recommendations. Chris and Ann shared that many of the recommendations have been completed and talked about upcoming efforts to develop a new set of recommendations. Ann will follow up about providing a presentation to Council in June.</p> <p>Paul: There is a role for the County to lead and bring in other public agencies to help with land acquisition for affordable housing projects. Paul asked what policy recommendations would look like for a land acquisition program. Tara shared about the group that was formed to work on this</p>



	<p>that includes County staff. She welcomes the committee recommending criteria, but the implementation should take place in a different setting.</p> <p>Committee members discussed their role, including how, when, and to who the committee makes recommendations or provides advice. Ann will follow up with the Executive's Office about what they would like this committee to work on.</p> <p>Samya: The Ruckelshaus Center just came out with their final Pathways to Housing Security Report to the Governor and the State Legislature in December and are facilitating community discussions about the recommendations in the report. Chris and Samya are working with Ruckelshaus staff to potentially have them come to Whatcom County for one of these discussions in June. Chris will follow-up with the report document.</p> <p>Ann asked if everyone received a copy of Health and Community Services' Annual Report.</p>
<p>11. Public Comment</p>	<p>The committee heard public comment from Sara O'Connor, Executive Director of Ferndale Community Services re: the PITC and their severe weather shelter operations over the winter season.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned.</p>

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 13, 2024, 8:30-10:00am

