



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

APRIL 22, 2024

Present: Allison Bishop, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Chelsea Johnson, Colton Kaltenfeldt, Jamie Desmul, Katherine Orlowski, Jason Oldham, Jon Scanlon, Karla Anderson, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Kristi Dominguez, Megan Juenemann, Monika Mahal, Ray Deck, Sallye Quinn, Samya Lutz, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson, Kristi Dominguez, Greg Hansen, Jen Wright, Lyn Salazar, Pamela Jons, Sterling Chick, Jed Holmes

Not Present: Sativa Robertson, Samantha Cruz Mendoza, Chelsea Johnson, Kayla Schott-Bresler

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
Welcome	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u></p> <p>I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.</p> <p>May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.</p> <p>This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land.</p> <p>Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways. https://www.lhaqtemish.org/ -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and self-care come first. • Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the best intentions. ○ Listen with an open mind and heart. • Be mindful of this space. Step in and step out/Step up and step back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights. • Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances. • Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County. • What is said here stays here. • Have fun. <p>Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</p>



<p>Approve Meeting Minutes</p>	<p>Minutes from March 29, 2024, were approved as presented.</p>
<p>Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation</p>	<p>Evaluation tool: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhilyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFzjQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</p> <p>The purpose of this Task Force was reviewed, as stated in the Ordinance. "The purpose of Whatcom County Child and Family Well-being Task Force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and family make recommendations for improvement for all departments."</p>
<p>Community Shares and Shoutouts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina and Jason reminded everyone that a Generations Forward dads peer support group is still meeting. Planning to shift to meeting outside, using a more activity-based model. They meet one Friday a month. Contact Christina or Jason with questions.
<p>Retreat Summary and Share Out</p>	<p>Vesla shared reflections on the meeting, and the retreat held last month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team spent a few hours in the Civic Building Garden Level Conference room, getting to know each other and understanding their roles in the task force. Provided a brief overview of the history and purpose of the Child & Family Well-being Task Force, which began meeting in March 2021. Discussed the Child and Family Action Plan and the milestones achieved over the years. The team went through the ordinance line by line, which helped them get grounded. <p>Megan shared that she found the retreat beneficial as a new member, especially the in-person interaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciated the breakdown of the history and the engaging discussions. Discussed the need for an elevator pitch for the task force. Suggested having a few meetings throughout the year where everyone is present in person for more engaging conversations. <p>Sally shared that they appreciated the historical background and clarity around the task force's purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felt inspired and daunted by the responsibilities of the task force. Enjoyed reading the ordinance line by line. Suggested designating some meetings as in-person attendance only instead of hybrid. <p>Sarah added that she was open to performing a read-through of the ordinance again and agreed with Megan that doing it together would create healthy conversation and make it come alive.</p> <p>Ray discussed the possibility of having a retreat once or twice a year. Suggested the co-chairs look at the calendar to plan a meeting in the fall and another retreat next spring.</p> <p>Colton agreed with Megan's suggestion of having 2-3 in-person meetings yearly, not necessarily full retreats. Thanked everyone who attended and encouraged those who didn't, to participate next time.</p>



Report to Council

Colton introduced the report on the agenda.

- Ray mentioned that the report was circulated late on Friday and thanked Alison for her efforts. The Healthy Children's Fund Subcommittee had met several times to work on the report.
- Colton provided a brief overview of the report.
 - The subcommittee's goal was to draft a report card that was even-handed and factual while also highlighting that the county was falling behind in the deadlines.
 - The report was collaborative, and feedback from the Health Department was sought to ensure accuracy.
 - The report highlighted ongoing childcare needs in the community and juxtaposed this with the timeline agreed upon in the HCF Implementation Plan.
 - The report also highlighted some significant challenges that might have caused delays.
 - The report provided several recommendations to the council to get things back on track.
 - These included presentations from the Health Department to the task force and the Council on staffing and infrastructure needs, inviting the county's legal department to clarify the question of public funds, and asking the executive office to explain how an RFP becomes a contract.

Christina explained the 'Fist to Five' method of voting.

Ann added that she appreciated the back-and-forth conversation and feedback. She mentioned that are 3.4 positions dedicated to the Healthy Children's Fund. One is paid with Healthy Children's Fund dollars and has been pushing to help get the ARPA childcare dollars out.

Colton asked if anyone had any notable things to mention or bring up before bringing the discussion to a vote.

- Council Member Scanlon raised a question about a change in the reporting deadline on the County Council agenda. He asked if the team thought this change should be permanent or if it could be a one-time thing.
 - Ann responded that the change was due to different legal counsel this year and turned into amending the ordinance. She suggested that having a specific date makes meeting council deadlines tricky.
 - Ray mentioned that this year's delay was due to the need to write some recommendations about the comprehensive plan, which took precedence over other tasks.
- Samya Lutz expressed concern about the report reflecting an "us and them" situation and suggested that more context, especially around staffing, be included.
 - Jamie agreed with Samya and suggested that the task force and county staff communicate more to resolve the tension.
 - Vesla Tonnessen suggested that the county could write a supplemental page to provide additional context.
- Ray Deck III mentioned that the health department is already scheduled to present to the council about the Healthy Children's Fund in early May. Ray confirmed that the report is due by the end of March.
 - Explained the roles of the fund administrator and the task force as described in the ordinance.



- Highlighted that the task force's role is to develop recommendations and write a report once a year.
- Noted that the Healthy Children's Fund also undergoes an external audit every two years.
- Emphasized the task force's role as part of a system of accountability, acting as citizen observers and reporting to the public and the council once a year.
- Suggested that the Health Department might want the task force to see more things, indicating a potential area of focus for the following year.
- Called for a vote after a general discussion and no specific proposals for edits.
- Katherine raised a point about unity and inclusiveness, especially in a crisis environment.
 - Suggested rephrasing questions in the report to avoid adding to the tension and putting people on the defense.
 - Recommended asking for solutions rather than pointing out what's wrong or taking too long.
 - Expressed agreement with many of Samya's points and shared her perspective on the report.
- Pamela appreciated the progress made on the document since the first draft.
 - Suggested that the whole task force might benefit from a chance to ask Health and Human Services Community Services staff some questions.
 - Questioned whether there could be a delay in conversing with staff to work out some things that don't need to go to the County Council.
 - Acknowledged the frustrations with the timing, the process, and the varying levels of involvement among task force members.
- Sallye acknowledged the tension inherent in the situation, given the county's polarization, the levy's narrow passage, and the need to tell the truth about the report's status.
 - Stressed the importance of factually and tonally accuracy and transparency in building trust.
 - Expressed support for the Children's Fund and the people implementing it despite the challenges.
 - Voiced support for the report, especially after incorporating feedback from the meeting.
- Kristi agreed with Sally's points and emphasized that tension is part of growth and that the work is messy.
 - Stressed the importance of transparency and honesty in building trust and preparing for future requests for additional dollars.
- Council Member Scanlon raised the question of the repercussions of a delay and suggested that if there were going to be a delay, the request to update the code would need to change its date.
 - Noted that the solutions to the questions posed in the report are not going to come from the council
 - Stated that solutions to the questions and getting things unstuck will come from the group.
 - Noted that the Council is a seven-member body with differing views on the program.
 - Emphasized the importance of continuing conversations within the group to figure things out.
- Ray discussed the repercussions of delaying the report, questioning what it would achieve.
 - Mentioned his conversation with Erica a month ago, where he informed her about the likely shape of the report and asked if she wanted to acknowledge that they were behind schedule publicly.
 - Stressed that building public trust comes from learning from the weaknesses of a fund like this publicly, even if it's uncomfortable.
- Ann expressed her perspective as a social worker who believes in the strengths perspective.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voiced her concern that if people who don't know the work read the report, they might think nothing good has come from the program. ○ Highlighted the excellent work done, particularly in the Vulnerable Children's Piece, and suggested highlighting some of the good stuff in the report. ● Colton called a question to the floor for everyone's consideration to approve the report as written. <p>Vote was brought to the group using Fist to Five. The vote did not pass, and the discussion continued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vesla proposed another round of discussion and voting, with the possibility of a simple majority vote after that. ● Samya expressed discomfort with the tone of the report and the conclusion of moving it to a different county department. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voiced concern that the report could be a disservice to the levy by highlighting tension and disagreements. ○ Advocated for more detailed work sessions as an entire task force rather than in subcommittees. ○ Indicated that she would continue to vote a two but was okay with being overridden by the full committee. ● Ray clarified the process of meeting and drafting the report, explaining the limitations imposed by the Open Public Meetings Act. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussed the tension between making work accessible to working parents and needing to meet more often for detailed work. ○ Invited Samya to join the Healthy Children's Fund subcommittee. ● Colton called for another round of voting on approving the report as written. <p>A vote was brought to the group using Fist to Five. One person indicated a two. The vote did not pass.</p> <p>Moved on to the third round of voting. The report was approved by a majority in the third round of voting.</p> <p>The task force voted for Ray and Colton to present the report to the Council.</p>
<p>Governance and Bylaws</p>	<p>Vesla brought forth the idea of writing down the task force's governance in a more formal document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explained the need to articulate how the task force works on paper. ● Discussed the Open Public Meetings Act (OPA) compliance requirement written in the ordinance and the unusualness of the state requiring an advisory body to be OPA compliant. ● The desire to work on documents outside of meeting time is restricted by OPA compliance. ● Proposed writing down all the things that the task force supports, particularly in OPA, like having meetings accessible and open to the public and posting minutes. ● Has been working with John Scanlan to draft some governance documents. ● Proposed a short-term ad hoc committee to review other boards and commissions in the county and see if there are ways to incorporate some of what they do in the task force's governance. ● Requested help from anyone interested in assisting with this task over the next month or so.



	<p>Ray encouraged those interested in helping with the governance documents to contact Vesla.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted the importance of having governance in place. • Mentioned a proto version of governance from the early days of the task force, including a task force role member role description and a co-chair role description. • Discussed adding elements like once-a-year retreats and twice-a-year encouraged in-person attendance meetings. • Tilda volunteered to help.
Healthy Children’s Fund (HCF)	<p>Sarah shared two updates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two weeks ago, the basic needs RFP posted about focusing on supplies for infants in the community. The emphasis was on ensuring that these resources are concentrated in Bellingham and accessible to families in Blaine and other rural parts of the community. • An RFP was submitted last week for the Stanford RAPID Survey that Vesla connected them with. This survey, which occurs quarterly, focuses on family and caregiver feedback. The information from this survey is received quickly and can be used to make decisions.
Public comment	<p>Colton acknowledged that members of the public were present at the meeting and asked for public comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was asked when the report that was mentioned earlier was due <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The report is due at the end of March, the 30th or 31st. • Colton shared that he is working on getting the Accountability sub-committee group up and running. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The big project on the docket for the accountability group is to comb through all the different reports and documents generated by the task force over the years. The aim is to itemize these during check-ins, determine the status of each recommendation, identify the primary contact for each, and establish when progress can be expected. ○ Wants to create a dashboard ○ If anyone would be interested in helping with this task, emphasize the importance of ensuring that the things written in reports don't just stay on paper. Reach out to Colton via email. <p>Tilda mentioned that the Healthy Children's Fund evaluation team has started meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sarah added that they meet every other Friday at 1 p.m. If you are interested in joining the group and receiving the notes from the evaluator, Village Reach, reach out.
Closing	<p>The meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm.</p>
Next Meeting	<p>Next regular meeting: April 22, 2024 <u>Location: Hybrid</u></p>