



WHATCOM COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

JULY 2, 2020

Present: Steve Bennett, Barry Buchanan, Sterling Chick - Vice Chair, Lindsey Karas, Chi-Na Stoane -Chair, Les Seelye, Leah Wainman **Absent:** Barbara Juarez
Guest: Holly O’Neil

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
Approve Notes From Last Meeting	Moved to adopt the March 5, 2020 and May 1, 2020 meeting summaries as submitted. Approved (7 to 0)
COVID-19 Response Update	<p>Whatcom County has had an increase in positive cases and we are not ready to move to Phase 3.</p> <p>The majority of cases has flipped from those 30 and over to those 29 and under, and some individuals have the potential to infect over 50 contacts via social events. We need to be creative in our messaging. Traditional media outlets are not reaching audiences of those under 30.</p> <p>The definition of an outbreak is 2 related cases within 2 weeks, or 1 case if in a communal living facility. There were 20 outbreaks in June. We offer support for employers pre and post outbreak and ensure those in isolation or quarantine have the supports they need. We are working with healthcare providers to ensure testing is available for those who need it.</p> <p>As we build capacity for case investigation, the Health Department (WCHD) is also working with Whatcom Unified and preparing for a surge in cases, as well a surge for those needing medical care</p> <p>WCHD staff are doing incredible work to cover roles outside of their regular work, and have pulled together as a strong team despite being tired and burned out.</p> <p>Dr. Stern noted that we have a recommendations, tools, and guidance, and we try to inform, influence, and engage people, but the dialogue often becomes “what do we have to do.” This is a challenge when people listen to those resisting the measures. To slow transmission, we need to make our messaging more effective, so people don’t look at it as control. We need help shifting culture so the community recognizes we are all in this together.</p> <p>Several PHAB members expressed appreciation and deep gratitude to the WCHD and its leadership for the multi-faceted approach, difficult work, and perseverance shown throughout this marathon; and encouraged each other to spread the word throughout their own individual networks.</p>
COVID-19 Employer Support Task Force Update and Presentation	<p>The COVID-19 Employer Support Task Force was created in late May and the goal of the task force was to help our community businesses and organizations to innovate and improve best practices for safety. We had amazing facilitators shepherding us through this process. The Task Force consisted of 144 people in 18 sectors.</p> <p>Holly O’Neil gave a shout out to the task force subcommittee and WCHD staff for their help, before she talked about what was done, what was learned, and specific challenges this complicated process. The process was very positive and collaborative, despite the complexity.</p>



	<p>Subcommittee members described the three main components that came out of this work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of peer to peer support • Safer. Stronger. Together. Campaign and resources • Robust online system of information and support
	<p>The next step is to launch Whatcom Together forums to touch base and discuss mask compliance and other challenges. The Task Force subcommittee will report back to the Health Board. Barry will see if he can make room for it on the agenda next Tuesday and will let Holly know.</p>
<p>Health Department 2021-22 Budget Overview</p>	<p>Kathleen discussed the slides from the packet showing division budgets and staffing, funding sources by division, expenses by division, and budget priorities. She described the two year budget process, department wide priorities, and proposed additional service requests for two new positions funded by the CARES Act: Epidemiologist and Special Projects Program Manager. We may be able to add temporary nursing staff with some of the funds. Nursing help is critical at this point to help take the load off and catch up on regular work.</p> <p>Our biggest expense is wages, except in Human Services because much of the revenue they receive goes back out to the community through our community partners. Human Services has money coming in from the State Department of Commerce to help the community and those most impacted.</p> <p>The County is administering the \$12M from the CARES Act as follows: \$5M for COVID Health Response throughout the County, approximately \$3M for WCHD, \$2M for the community, and \$2M for Isolation and Quarantine.</p> <p>Due to lost revenue from taxes and fees, the County has implemented a budget reduction plan. As part of this plan the County is negotiating with employee unions for staff to take unpaid furlough. One of the largest represented groups in the County voted to furlough 4 days between July and September. We don't know what outcome of the other two unions will be. Over the last 4 months, WCHD staff have only been able to take an average of 6 hours of vacation, so furlough will have impacts on operations this summer. Though we recognize the County has an overall responsibility to reduce the budget, it will be a challenge to staff the COVID response and maintain adequate service to the community.</p> <p>Chi-Na asked if we can use CARES Act funding instead of having WCHD staff furlough. PHAB members asked how to help and who they should talk to to ensure WCHD staff would not be expected to take furlough at a time when they need more staff, not less. Barry noted that it is out of the hands of the Council and because of the unions, loss of revenue across the board, and conflicting priorities; it is more complex than the needs of the WCHD. PHAB will put their concerns into an email and send it to the County Executive, Deputy Executive, and the County Council.</p>
<p>Agenda Items 5, 6, 7</p>	<p>Due to a lack of time to cover all agenda items, the last three items are tabled for a special meeting in the near future. Tammy will reach out for PHAB member availability and schedule a meeting in late July or early August.</p>
<p>Other/Public Comment</p>	<p>None.</p>