

Whatcom County Business & Commerce Committee

1801 Roeder Avenue ■ Bellingham, WA 98225 ■ wcbcc@portofbellingham.com ■ (360) 715-5118

WCBCC November Meeting Minutes (11/18/24)

WCBCC Members Present

Dan Dunne, WCBCC Chair

Debbie Ahl, Healthcare Industry

Ryan Allsop, Other For-Profit

Pam Brady, Energy

Clark Campbell, Recreation

Casey Diggs, WCBCC Co-Chair

Matthew Green, Higher Education

Mayor Scott Korthuis (standing in for Mayor Greg Hansen)

Mayor Kim Lund

Troy Muljat, Other For-Profit

Brad Rader, Agriculture

CJ Seitz, Higher Education

Heather Steele, Public K-12 Education

Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu

Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremmer

WCBCC Members Not Present

Paul Burrill, Food Processing

Pete Dawson, Commercial Real Estate

Sarah Rothenbuhler, Other For-Profit

Tyler Schroeder, Port of Bellingham

Russell (RB) Tewksbury, Internet Technology

Dana Wilson, Marine Trades

Non-Members/Public Present: Andrew Calkins, Lance Calloway, Jane Carten, Barbara Chase, Hugh Conroy, Anna Dealy, Andrea Doyle, Jessie Everson, Jasmine Fast, Peter Frazier, Brian Heinrich, Frank Imhoff, Mauri Ingram, Patricia Kwan, Rose Lathrop, Troy Lautenbach, Rob Lee, Gil Lund, Guy Occhiogrosso, Emily O'Connor, Hannah Ordos, Lily Pennucci, Margaret Reich, Andrea Ruback, Paul Schissler, Dann Mead Smith, Mark Solomon, Alexandria Spaulding

Call to Order

WCBCC Chair Dan Dunne called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Approval of the Minutes

Ryan Allsop moved, seconded by Troy Muljat, to adopt the meeting minutes from October 14, 2024.

Motion passed.

Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee (WCBCC) General Business

Dan Dunne, Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee Chair

Key Points:

- **Chair Election:** Dan Dunne's WCBCC chair term ends in December 2024; Election to be held next month.
- **Committee Terms and Vacancies:** Several committee terms will end in January 2025, including Clark Campbell (recreation), Troy Muljat (real estate), and Brad Rader (agriculture). Heather Powell, CEO of Boys and Girls Clubs of Whatcom County, is recommended for a childcare position, with an application expected. Gil Lund, Program Manager at Fives Lund LLC, has a pending application for manufacturing.

Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee (WCBCC) General Business (cont'd)

Dan Dunne, Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee Chair

Key Points:

- **Subcommittee Review:** Members suggested reassessing the subcommittee structure to better align with current priorities, including possibly adding a transportation subcommittee. Further discussions are planned for February 2025.
- **Quorum and Voting Member Structure:** The current quorum requires a majority of all members (voting and non-voting), which could be challenging with fewer voting members in January. Adjusting the quorum to count only voting members will be discussed further, with a potential motion at the December 2024 meeting.

Whatcom County Budget Overview (2022-2025)

Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu + Whatcom County Deputy Executive Aly Pennucci

Aly Pennucci, Deputy Executive of Whatcom County, provided a summary of the county's biennial budget process, emphasizing challenges like rising costs, expiring federal funds, and flat tax revenues. The 2024 budget focuses on maintaining services, addressing underfunded internal departments, and minimizing deficit spending. Revenue comes mainly from property and sales taxes, with greater expenditures in criminal justice, public works, and governance. Staffing growth reflects community needs, but spending controls are in place. A mid-biennium review in 2025 will prioritize efficiencies to address structural deficits and ensure long-term financial stability.

Washington Center for Employee Ownership & Inclusive Economies

Mauri Ingram, President and CEO of Whatcom Community Foundation + Patricia Kwan, Director of the Washington Center for Employee Ownership & Inclusive Economies

Mauri Ingram, CEO of the Whatcom Community Foundation and Patricia Kwan, Director of the Washington Center for Employee Ownership and Inclusive Economies, presented an overview of the foundation's efforts to foster inclusive economic growth, with a focus on promoting employee ownership through the Washington Center for Employee Ownership. Employee ownership, which allows workers to gain equity and wealth-building opportunities, is seen as a viable succession option for retiring business owners. The discussion highlighted the benefits of employee-owned businesses, including higher wages, stronger employee engagement, longer job tenure, and increased community wealth circulation. Challenges such as awareness and conversion costs were addressed, alongside state initiatives like tax credits and support programs to encourage transitions. The presentation emphasized collaboration between government, businesses, and advisors to expand the employee-owned business model in Washington.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.