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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Health Committee

May 27, 2008

Committee Chair L. Ward Nelson called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

Laurie Caskey-Schreiber
Barbara Brenner

Absent:

None

Also Present:

None

OTHER ITEMS

1. PROGRESS REPORT – IDENTIFYING ISSUES

Susan Sloan, Health Department, read from the agenda (*on file*) regarding this agenda item. They have contacted people in Point Roberts about focus group meetings. There were three attendees at the Nooksack-Everson-Sumas meeting, 30 in Bellingham, and 17 at the Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers group in Everson. The public forums and stakeholder group meetings are done. This week, there are three more focus group meetings.

Brenner asked why they are meeting with just seniors in Point Roberts. Sloan stated she contacted several people in the community.

Brenner stated they must contact the Voters' Association and the Taxpayers' Association. Those are the two most active groups in Point Roberts.

Nelson stated there haven't been high turnouts, even though the groups are well-publicized. Point Roberts residents turn out when there is a controversial issue. This is difficult for people unless something is in writing. They could send a Health Care Forum notice, but he suspects there won't be a big turnout unless the people know what the County is talking about.

Brenner stated that in the future, contact the Voters' Association, the Taxpayers' Association, and the All Point Bulletin.

Caskey-Schreiber stated this is a focus group, which is different from a public meeting.

Brenner stated it may be better to combine the focus group and public meeting since the community is so isolated.

Nelson stated that Councilmember Brenner should contact the residents.

Sloan stated she would be happy to do another focus group if they can get eight to ten people together.

1 Nelson stated he attended most of the meetings. People who attended are excited
2 about participating. He asked the next step.
3

4 Sloan handed out a preliminary focus group summary (*on file*). The issues were
5 collected from the focus group meetings they've held so far. She also has notes from the
6 key stakeholder interview that she still has to summarize. She also has information from
7 public forums. It will take about a month to summarize the information. She hopes to
8 schedule another Health Committee in a month.
9

10 Caskey-Schreiber asked if these are actual comments obtained from citizens. Sloan
11 stated they are, during the focus group meetings.
12

13 Caskey-Schreiber asked the structure of the focus group. Sloan described the
14 structure of the focus group meetings. They asked questions about a vision for health care
15 in 2012, the barriers to health care in 2008, and the one issue people would be most willing
16 to put money toward.
17

18 Nelson stated those questions were asked during the smaller groups. People came
19 forward during the larger meetings with their own concerns about a healthy community.
20 Sloan stated that even though they didn't get the attendance they would have liked, the
21 people who attended were extremely engaged.
22

23 Brenner asked if they are going to include definitions of some of the terms. Sloan
24 stated she will. She has a lot of work to do to aggregate and summarize the items on the
25 list. The concerns were different in the different areas. Every area had its own concerns.
26 She'd like to do a summary that is a visual of the topics and how they relate to each other.
27

28 **2. DISCUSSION ON MOVING FORWARD**

29 Issue Prioritization

30
31
32 Sloan stated they originally envisioned taking the survey to a wider audience, but
33 there is a cost to that. They can do a representative sample of 300 or 400 people that
34 would be more cost-effective, but less representative. They will put together a proposal for
35 three or four different survey proposals and their associated costs.
36

37 Brenner stated talk to the Parks Department survey consultant, who did a very good
38 job.
39

40 Caskey-Schreiber stated that consultant said it's statistically significant to do a
41 survey of 250 people. Therefore, a survey of 300 or 400 people would be good.
42

43 Nelson asked the importance of the survey. Sloan stated a survey is one way to get
44 a representative opinion of the community on the importance of the issues gathered during
45 the focus and public meetings. Then they quantify those issues.
46

47 Nelson asked if there are criteria used to quantify those questions. Sloan stated
48 there are.
49

50 Nelson asked if they will categorize the list of items. Sloan stated the list will have to
51 be condensed to a three- to four-page survey.
52

1 Caskey-Schreiber stated they must also outreach to the community to get a broader
2 representation of the entire community. Sloan stated she agrees. Some people may not
3 have been able to attend the public meetings and focus groups.

4
5 Nelson asked how many mailings would go out to get 300 or 400 responses.

6
7 Caskey-Schreiber stated they can do a phone interview.

8
9 Sloan stated she will consult with the State Department of Health (DOH) for free.
10 Their staff will help her determine the sample stratification and how many they need
11 exactly. That will be a cost-effective way of putting something together.

12
13 Nelson asked when they will have a cost estimate. Sloan stated she can have a cost
14 estimate in a couple of weeks.

15
16 Caskey-Schreiber stated they've done a really good job. She's pleased with the
17 number of participants, especially with the Spanish-speaking group. Sloan stated they tried
18 to do the same thing with the Slavic community in Kendall, but no one attended. They
19 worked through the Slavic church in Bellingham. They may have had a turnout if they held
20 a meeting for the Slavic community in Bellingham. The Slavic contacts they worked with
21 were in Bellingham. They now have a contact in Kendall.

22
23 Nelson stated there is a difference when dealing with the Russian community and the
24 Ukrainian community. Sloan stated she attended an event for the Slavic community that
25 included people from many communities, including Ukrainian and Russian. Most of the
26 Slavic people came here to escape religious persecution. She has good contacts with the
27 community now, and can move forward with that.

28 29 Future Search Conference

30
31 There is a proposal to do a Future Search Conference in October. They need three
32 months to plan an invitation list. She has funding from a Case Foundation grant to host the
33 conference.

34
35 Nelson stated the Public Health Advisory Board discussed open space technology. He
36 watched a DVD of an open search done in Santa Cruz, California that dealt with housing
37 issues. They developed processes to achieve their vision and goals. The conferences
38 generally take two days. Another conference dealt with children in Sudan and its war
39 conflict.

40
41 The basic premise of a future search is that there is no agenda. The people who
42 attend develop the agenda. The difficulty he saw was that the objectives focus on what
43 everyone agrees to. However, the Comprehensive Health Plan may have elements that not
44 everyone agrees with. The Advisory Board decided to try a conference on one specific
45 issue.

46
47 Sloan stated that if the future search conference is successful, they could do future
48 searches on other topics.

49
50 Nelson stated the advantage of a future search is that they accomplish much more in
51 a faster period of time. He's worried about losing people's interest if they don't keep things
52 going.

1 Caskey-Schreiber asked how they would facilitate such a meeting. Sloan stated it is
2 a totally different process that takes much planning. They need two professional
3 facilitators, a committee to work on the meeting, and a facility. People in the community
4 want to work on this project now and begin moving issues forward.
5

6 Nelson stated there are principles. First, get representatives from the entire system
7 into the room at the same time. Work done is in the context of a larger world environment,
8 not just the local community.
9

10 Sloan stated the first day is spent on exploring their past. The second part is looking
11 at their present status. They won't agree on everything, and this process accounts for that.
12 They agree to set aside differences and use common ground to move forward.
13

14 Nelson continued to read the principles. Groups are self-managing. There are no
15 external experts. The future search is not a problem-solving conference.
16

17 Brenner asked why there are no external experts.
18

19 Nelson stated it's community-based effort.
20

21 Caskey-Schreiber asked about the facilitators. Sloan stated the facilitators make
22 sure the process is moving along, but they don't provide content. They make sure
23 everything is on time.
24

25 Nelson stated everyone gets depressed the first day because the problems seem so
26 large. They start pulling things together on the second day. The third day, they identify
27 roles and responsibilities for everyone who attends. Sloan stated this process is used a lot
28 in business.
29

30 Caskey-Schreiber stated she's fine with moving ahead. She likes the approach to
31 bring one issue forward, not the entire plan, which would be chaos. Parcel out the plan.
32 Get as focused as possible. It's so big. Think about how to promote it. Sloan stated they
33 will identify the topic, and then decide who needs to be at the table. They have to start
34 planning now for an October conference. They will start now to form a committee.
35

36 Brenner stated she supports the concept of the committee. She prefers to have the
37 issue summary condensed and refined, and then have that information to look at before a
38 meeting.
39

40 Nelson stated this is an excellent list of focus group issues. It provides him a lot of
41 information about the community's concerns. Some of the issues may not be included in
42 the plan as specifically as some people want, but it can be included as a goal and objective
43 to coordinate with the plan and identify the community's needs. Sloan stated there is
44 opportunity to work with community partners and give them feedback.
45

46 Nelson stated the Public Health Advisory Board will spend more time on this at its
47 next meeting.
48

49 Brenner asked that there be no acronyms.
50

51 Sloan stated she will gather cost estimates for surveys and do the issues summary.
52 She asked if they can proceed with putting together a committee.
53

1 **The Committee concurred.**

2
3 Nelson asked about the Case Foundation grant. Sloan stated they received a
4 \$10,000 grant. Out of 4,700 applicants, she was in the top 20.

5
6 Nelson stated he will go to a conference in Seattle. Those at the conference want to
7 hear about this process, and the affects on local community. The State is trying to bring
8 more counties into this connect program. They're looking for ideas on funding and outreach
9 to local communities. Whatcom County's activities will be models for the entire state and
10 possibly the United States.

11
12 Sloan stated they are doing a joint presentation at the Statewide Assessment
13 Meeting on this process, to all assessment coordinators in the state. She has also made a
14 connection with the Washington State Health Foundation. They are doing a joint
15 presentation during an October conference for the entire State. It's possible to get money
16 for future searches through the Washington State Health Foundation. Few of their grant
17 dollars have come to Whatcom County.

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19
20 **ADJOURN**


21 The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:18 p.m.

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26 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

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28
29 ATTEST:

30 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
31 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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33 
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35 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

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L. Ward Nelson, Committee Chair