

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health Subcommittee
Meeting Summary for September 17, 2017

1. Call To Order

Committee Chair Anne Deacon called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. at the Health Department Creekside Conference Room, 509 Girard Street, Bellingham.

Members Present: Megan Ballew, Doug Chadwick, Anne Deacon, Dan Hammill, Kelli Linville, Byron Manering,

Members Absent: Starleen Maharaj-Lewis, Ryan King, Mike Parker

2. Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2263 regarding funding for housing and cultural activities *(Continued from July 16)*

Hammill described the history and purpose of ESHB 2263. The County must approve a ballot measure for the voters this year, but there may be a legislative change that could allow it to be a councilmanic decision next year.

Deacon described funding options, including ESHB 2263 and past pending House Bill (HB) 2437, which was a councilmanic action to recover a sales tax rebate and was not an additional tax on people. HB 2437 was for affordable housing, and may come up again at the next legislative session. There are outstanding questions of timing and potential voter fatigue.

The committee members discussed:

- A public safety tax and other potential taxes coming forward
- The sustainability of sales tax rebates due to recent teacher wage increases
- Whether the County could levy a tax just on unincorporated areas
- Other levy options
- Continuing to strategize to identify what they can do themselves, possibly wait for the election, and legislative session end to see what happens
- How to advocate for funding options, particularly in unincorporated Whatcom County.
- Creating a list of legislative priorities for the lobbyist
- An expanded presentation from Holly O'Neil on the results of the jail listening tour
- Community Health Assessment and setting priorities
- Proposed private mental health hospital, and the impact to the new County triage facility. State-only Medicaid dollars to the private facility may come from designated triage facility funds.

3. Regular Update on GRACE, CPIT, and Whatcom has Hope programs

Deacon provided an update on the GRACE program:

- Received \$489,000 for 1st year funding from the State

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- SeaMar is contracted as the hub agency and hiring staff
- They are working on a screening system for new referrals
- Community paramedics will partner with GRACE
- They are working with emergency medical services (EMS) on a shared office space
- They expect to see reductions in jail use frequency and severity and in emergency department use

4. Other Business

This item was not discussed.

5. Next Steps: Ideas & Further Information

At the next meeting:

- House Bill 2437
- A focused presentation from the Health Department on the Community Health Assessment
- Jail population statistics, who should do the work?

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:37 a.m.