



Snohomish Health District
Board of Health Minutes
Special Meeting
May 31, 2022

The meeting was held via Zoom conference call/video.

Members Present

Julieta Altamirano-Crosby, Councilmember, Lynnwood
Elisabeth Crawford, Councilmember, Mukilteo
Megan Dunn, County Councilmember
Mark James, Councilmember, Marysville
Anji Jorstad, Councilmember, Lake Stevens
Heather Logan, Councilmember, Arlington
Sam Low, County Councilmember
Kyoko Matsumoto Wright, Mayor, Mountlake Terrace
Jared Mead, County Councilmember
Nate Nehring, County Councilmember
Neil Tibbott, Councilmember, Edmonds
Stephanie Vignal, Councilmember, Mill Creek
Stephanie Wright, County Councilmember – BOH Chair
Ben Zarlingo, Councilmember, Everett

Members Absent

Joe Neigel, Councilmember, Sultan

Comings and Goings

Anji Jorstad left at 3:46 p.m.

Neil Tibbot left at 4:06 p.m.

Snohomish County Guests Present

Kent Patton, Lacey Harper, Kelsey Bang-Olsen, Dave Somers, Jason Biermann, Josh Dugan, Eric Parks, Vanessa de Salome', Brian Haseleu

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Board of Health was called to order at 3:02 p.m. via Zoom conference call by Board Chair Stephanie Wright.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Ms. Sarah de Jong who reported there was a quorum present.

Public Comment

Public comment was accepted in writing prior to the meeting. Mr. Shawn Frederick read aloud a comment submitted via email from County Executive Dave Somers sharing support for merging the Health District into Snohomish County Government. The email was endorsed by several Mayors in the county.

Action

Strengthening Public Health in Snohomish County



Chair Stephanie Wright introduced County Executive Dave Somers. Executive Somers thanked the Board of Health for their partnership during the pandemic and throughout the years. Many of the major public health issues require a multifaceted approach blending traditional public health with human services, law enforcement, and emergency management. The goal of consolidating the Health District into county government would be to add to and strengthen public health. The County fully intends to bring all Health District staff over and is currently undergoing a class and compensation study for all regular county employees. This study would be expanded to include Health District employees as well. Executive Somers is interested in, and personally committed to, returning direct services through the health department. By consolidating with the County, public health would have access to tax funds such as the mental health sales tax. The department would be led by a director of public health, similar to the current administrative officer position and there would continue to be a health officer. The new Board of Health would include non-elected officials with expertise and interest in public health.

Executive Somers introduced Lacey Harper, who reviewed the memorandum from Executive Somers to Snohomish County Council members regarding institutionalizing public health success. This memo can be found as part of the meeting packet.

Chair Wright then opened the floor to Board members for questions, and the following questions and comments were provided by Board of Health members:

Questions:

- Q. What would the improvements of public health services be?
 - A. As part of a broader system, public health will have the support of human services, grant writing opportunities, and a whole plethora of staff with different expertise in different departments. There's a commitment to keep all the funding there and one of the benefits is the availability of accessing sales tax revenue.
- Q. Are there any planned deliverables within any given time, such as the first 90 days or first year of merging?
 - A. First deliverable is to bring all the staff and the organization over whole and intact. The County is committed to ensuring staff salaries will not go backward and will either stay at the current rate or increase. The immediate goal is to get the organization set up and begin developing a strong policy framework.
- Q. Some constituents and other stakeholders are concerned that there could be a politicization of public health. How do you plan to ensure that will not happen?
 - A. The first goal is to build a stronger framework and to have the department firmly established. While there are no guarantees going into the future, the immediate focus is to strengthen the importance of the role of public health and of being driven by science data.
- Q. Would the decisionmakers be the County Council?
 - A. In many cases, yes, but during the pandemic, the County Executive had emergency authority.
- Q. Would the budget be completely separate?
 - A. All dollars that are currently going to public health will continue and will be put in a department total budget. The County is now starting to send out directives to its departments and would begin building the health department's budget between now and the end of the year. The County is not trying to take any dollars away from public health funding.
- Q. How will this affect the cities' budgets?
 - A. This merge is not meant to impact the cities' budgets. The County isn't proposing to request a per capita contribution from the cities. The Health District has already discontinued requesting



the per capita contribution because of an increase in funding through the State foundational public health funds.

- Q. Many cities had contributed to the Health District's property. How would that be handled?
- A. The current plan is to keep the health department in that building for the time being and space needs are still currently being assessed. Between 2016-2018, the Health District was evaluating the need to continue to exist at the Rucker Building and had a tentative agreement to purchase a different building and had also tentatively sold this building. As part of that process, the District worked with each of the cities to secure a release of the city's interest in the Rucker Building and so this part of the process has already been resolved.
- Q. Will there be a transition team from the Board of Health to ensure questions are handled and the Board of Health stays informed as to the progress?
- A. There are already multiple interdisciplinary teams and the County would like the Board of Health to be included in each of those workgroups. Invitations have been held off until it's known that this work will be moving forward.
- Q. Are there any dealbreakers?
- A. Dealbreakers have not been a part of the discussion. The County is committed to bringing all staff over and has plenty of capacity to do that while upholding the current structure.
- Q. Who would have responsibility for determining the Health Officer and other executive roles?
- A. The County Executive hires directors but they have to be confirmed by the Council.

Comments:

- Support for activities that improve public health services to residents and constituents
- Concern over the speed at which this is presented to Board of Health members
- Recommendation to reach out to Stillaguamish tribe in the north part of the county
- Support for the idea of a transition committee and for that committee to include diversity in its members

The next steps are for the County Council to take action at the next County Council meeting on June 8 to withdraw the Council from the Health District. That would then begin the process and on January 1, there would be a health department as part of the county.

Mr. Shawn Frederick read aloud the proposed resolution.

It was moved by Mr. Ben Zarlingo and seconded by Mr. Nate Nehring to approve Resolution 22-16 expressing support for local public health services being consolidated within Snohomish County government. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Stephanie Wright, Chair

Shawn Frederick, Administrative Officer / Secretary