

**MINUTES OF THE
NORTHWEST REGIONAL COUNCIL
May 19, 2023**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Island County Commissioners Melanie Bacon and Jill Johnson, San Juan County Council Members Jane Fuller and Christine Minney, Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Council Member Kathy Kershner

STAFF: Amanda McDade, Elizabeth Anderson, Sarah Silvas, Katie Durbec, Darla Smith, Bethany Chamberlain, Aly Horry,

PUBLIC: Barb Pesola, San Juan County, NWSSB Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by Island County Commissioner Jill Johnson.

There was no public comment.

Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon and Seconded Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu to approve the Consent Agenda items a – e: Approval of the Minutes, Regular Meeting December 15, 2022: Approval of November, December, January, and February 2023 Expenditure Listings: 2022 Budget to Actual Report: Routine Contracts and Amendments: Signatures of Authoritative Body. The Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade shared a presentation with the Board that covered legislative updates; including a 26% increase for the rate for the Health Homes program, a \$2.4 million general fund increase for case management, and approved maintenance level funding for the Dementia Support Program. In addition, she reviewed the 2022 annual report, WA Cares – Long Term Trust Act, future growth, strategic planning, and discussed the concern regarding lack of future caregivers. There was discussion about the need to advocate for WA Cares funds not being counted as personal resources so that people trying to apply for Medicaid can use the funds to help bridge the gap between available resources and when Medicaid will kick in. The funds need to be recognized as a state asset and not personal asset. Kate White Tudor was noted as the agency lobbyist.

Regular Agenda

a) Proposed Benefit Changes

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade reviewed the proposed benefit changes which include adding 3 wellness days and reducing accrued vacation cash out to one time a year. NWRC staff previously met with Commissioner Bacon to discuss proposed benefit changes as suggested at the last Board meeting. The proposed benefit changes are the same as presented in December, with additional details about the need for the changes. The agency remains committed to encouraging staff to take their earned benefits.

Motion was made by Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu to approve, as presented, 3 additional personal holidays (Wellness Days) to be available for employee use effective June 1, 2023, and vacation payout to be 1 time per calendar year, effective January 1, 2024. Island

County Commissioner Melanie Bacon seconded the motion. Discussion followed. Motion passed unanimously.

b) Market Rate and Staffing Adjustments

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade provided an overview of the proposal to increase the base salary for range 6 and reclassify 1 Case Manager to Lead Case Manager. There was discussion about the job descriptions, and how the budget would be impacted.

Motion was made by Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu to authorize the proposed Market Rate Adjustment to Range 6 of the salary schedule, and the addition of a Lead Case Manager role, effective June 1st. Whatcom County Council Member Kathy Kershner seconded the motion. The Motion passed unanimously.

c) Establish Reloadable Debit Card Account Balance

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade and NEMT Manager, Aly Horry, discussed moving \$10,000 into the NWRC US Bank account to fund the NEMT gas voucher program. The gas voucher program will eliminate the need for the Agency to reimburse people for their mileage expenses via check and create much wider options to fuel their vehicles by allowing them to go to any gas station, instead of the 6 currently listed. The utilization of the Relias Card via US Bank was piloted after Board approval in 2022 and is going well. Currently we load pre-paid debit cards 1x a week. To fully transition the program the cards need to be loaded daily. The agency currently has issued approximately 200 cards and we want to increase this to reach all who need it. If cards are lost they are more easily replaced than a lost check. Clients must go to their appointment prior to receiving reimbursement and attendance is verified by the agency.

Motion was made by Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon to establish a balance of \$10,000 for its reloadable debit card program at US Bank in Bellingham to ensure timely expense reimbursement to Non-Emergency Medical Transportation clients. Whatcom County Council Member Kathy Kershner seconded the motion. The Motion passed unanimously.

d) Strategic Plan

The Board reviewed the 2023 proposed meeting schedule. There was discussion about lack of bus service to Blaine and other transportation needs throughout the 4 communities we serve. The group discussed agency DEI initiatives and the need to weave them into the strategic plan.

Motion was made by Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon to authorize staff to proceed with development of the 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan, with the focus on the following areas:

- 1. Building Long-Term Services and Supports to meet Complex Needs**
- 2. Providing Information and Access**
- 3. Supporting Family Caregivers and People Impacted by Dementia**
- 4. Transportation**
- 5. Coordination with Tribes**
- 6. Behavioral Health and Isolation**
- 7. Ensuring leadership and success in regards to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.**

The motion was seconded by San Juan County Council Member Jane Fuller. Discussion followed. The motion passed unanimously.

e) Nomination of Officers and Executive Committee

It was noted that the new term would start in January 2024 and last for 2 years. Nominations were as follows:

Chair: San Juan County Council Member Jane Fuller

Vice-Chair: Whatcom County Council Member Kathy Kershner

Executive Committee: Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon, Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen

Motion made to approve the nominations by Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon and seconded by San Juan County Commissioner Christine Minney. Motion passed unanimously.

f) Other Issues

There was no additional county information shared.

g) Announcements

Kathy Kershner was invited to participate on the Aging Well Steering Group – Aging Well Whatcom Plan and will share back to this group.

There was a request for a presentation/retreat with a focus on how different counties provide program services. It was suggested that a member from each County provide a presentation to the group.

Executive Session

- a) An Executive Session was called at 11:37 am to discuss legal updates. The Chair estimated the session would last up to 10 minutes.

The regular board meeting reconvened at 11:50 am.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:51 am.

Prepared and submitted by:

Darla Smith

Darla Smith, Administrative Manager