

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023**

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, September 26, 2023, with Chair Peter Browning, Commissioner Ron Wesen, and Commissioner Lisa Janicki present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Browning called the to order at 9:47 a.m.

II. AGENDA:

a) Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Commissioner Wesen to approve the Record of the Proceedings for May 9 and July 11, 2023. Commissioner Janicki seconded the motion.

The vote passed unanimously.

1. Board of Health Record of the Proceedings for May 9, 2023. **(Approved)**
2. Board of Health Record of the Proceedings for July 11, 2023. **(Approved)**

b) Public Health Director Remarks

Public Health Director Keith Higman discussed community engagement and he appreciated being the director of involved staff and a vibrant community.

c) Recovery Month Proclamation

Mr. Higman introduced Behavioral Health Coordinator Christi Brua Weaver who provided an overview of the celebration of recovery month and pathways to recovery.

Ms. Brua Weaver introduced Tom Carney, Earnest Russel, and Valerie McCormack who each shared stories with the Board about what recovery has meant to them, and the meaningful partnerships and relationships formed through Catholic Community Services, New Earth Recovery, Alan Muia, and Drug Court.

Chair Browning read the Proclamation regarding September as Recovery Month in Skagit County to support and celebrate those living a life of recovery.

The Board thanked Mr. Carney, Mr. Russel, and Ms. McCormack for taking the time to share their impactful stories of recovery.

d) Population Health Trust – Food Security Work Group:

Mr. Higman introduced Public Health Analyst Kristen Ekstran to discuss and understand the Board's priorities regarding the Food Security Data Report.

1. Food Security Data Report

Ms. Ekstran briefed the Board on the workgroup's review of the food system: growing/farming, process/production, distribution, diet, cooking food, and surplus/waste.

She noted that this was the largest report done to date by the Population Health Trust (PHT).

2. Overview

Ms. Ekstran provided an overview of the key themes that emerged during PHT work:

1. Increased collaboration was needed.
2. Small and emerging farmers were most likely to participate in the provision of coordinated food and meal programs.
3. Cultural barriers to access, information, and education needed to be addressed.
4. A network of public serving organizations to support disaster-related nutrition/hydration needs needed to be established.

Strategic plan goals reviewed included:

1. Collaboration with and between farmers for the purchase of seed to grow crops for local suppliers.
2. Ensuring the availability of storage, distribution, and processing so that food grown here was widely available to residents.
3. Emergency preparedness.
4. Ensuring equitable access to food and meal support programs.
5. Minimizing food waste and redirecting surplus into a sustainable food system.

3. Group Discussion

Ms. Ekstran invited PHT members and the Board to discuss the report and any additional considerations.

Communicable Disease Manager Polly Dubbel and PHT member Mo Pettitt discussed data management and extending the reach of programs (for example expanding the Farm to School program to more schools). Board of Health member Lisa Janicki discussed fluctuating food prices (if able to provide more stability?), and the seasonal abundance of food. PHT member Bill Hinkle discussed the importance of collaboration, the ability to grow food for residents, and potential grants from the state to help with growing food for the community through a Farm to Food grant, We Feed WA grant, and WSDA programs. Board of Health member Ron Wesen discussed the history and evolution of farming from small local farms that provided local produce, to the now larger, consolidated farms that supplied nationwide distribution centers.

Other priorities discussed were building off already successful models and expanding them, ensuring all regions of Skagit County could be served during an emergency (and having storage and distribution available for essential items), and having a slogan (maybe “Eat well, Eat local, Have fun”).

Ms. Ekstran thanked Board of Health for the discussion and feedback and said that the plan would be finalized soon and prepared for their endorsement.

Themes/Goals: <https://www.skagitcounty.net/CountyCommissioners/Documents/AgendaPackets/09252023.zip>

e) Health Officer Update

Mr. Higman introduced Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Leibrand. Dr. Leibrand discussed the upcoming flu season and increased risk for other respiratory infections like RSV and COVID. He discussed the benefits of wearing a mask when feeling sick, testing for infections, and getting vaccinated and boosted. Free COVID testing kits were once again available through the United States Postal Service.

Dr. Leibrand said that the COVID vaccine would soon be available as one single dose/shot and he anticipated there would be annual COVID booster shots available as well. He discussed the Paxlovid vaccine that helped with COVID symptoms if received in the first five days of infection. He commented on COVID outbreaks in long-term care facilities and said it was an indicator that COVID was still a prevalent virus in the community.

He encouraged eating healthy, getting enough sleep, and exercising.

f) Public Comment

Lisa from Tierra Nueva shared concerns about being unable to provide chaplain services to inmates in the Community Justice Center/Jail. These services had been paused due to COVID and the interruption had created a void in the recovery system. If inadequate staffing for her personal safety was the concern, she said she would be happy to sign a waiver releasing the jail from any liability so that she, and others, could begin meeting with inmates again.

III. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Browning adjourned the proceedings at 10:58 a.m.

*Note, to obtain an audio or video recording of this meeting; please contact the Skagit County Commissioners' office.

**BOARD OF HEALTH
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Ron Wesen, Chair

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

Lisa Janicki, Commissioner

Dr. Connie Davis, At Large Board Member

Dr. Aaron Katz, At Large Board Member

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board