

**MINUTES OF THE
NORTHWEST REGIONAL COUNCIL
April 18, 2024**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon, San Juan County Council Members Christine Minney and Jane Fuller, Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning, Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremler

STAFF: Amanda McDade, Sarah Silvas, Darla Smith

PUBLIC: none present

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 am by San Juan County Councilmember Jane Fuller.

There was no public comment.

Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu and Seconded by Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremler to approve the Consent Agenda items a – e: Approval of the Minutes, December 9, 2023: Approval of November, December, January, and February Expenditure Listings: 2024 Budget to Actual Report: Routine Contracts and Amendments; Signatures of Authoritative Body. The Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade welcomed new board members Mark Stremler and Janet St. Clair.

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade reviewed the legislative advocacy efforts including:

- The request to fund an additional \$7 million (+inflation) for NEMT passed.
- \$15.2 million was requested to support nutrition programs. \$12 million was approved. This was a one-year request, we will need to ask for funding again in 2025.
- The request to fund \$2.58 million for In-Home Case Managers for Long-term care clients without caregivers was not successful. We know that this need will continue to grow as more people are growing older, there are more clients with dual diagnoses, and more younger people need care and are not connected to services. This is compounded by the fact that there are fewer people available to be caregivers.

Regular Agenda

a) WA Cares

NWRC Community Programs Director Melody Woodrich provided an update on WA Cares and outreach activities. While there is a chance that WA Cares may go on the next ballot, NWRC continues to focus on the program moving forward as is. Benefits will become available July 1, 2026. Our outreach activities are a bit different than other programs as we are trying to reach a younger audience. Most of the interest we currently see is from the faith-based community, farm workers, migrants, and the employed disabled population. There was concern raised about \$36,000 over a lifetime not being enough. While we know it is not enough, it is a

start and can be impactful. There is evidence that shows when people get the help they need earlier it can prolong their ability to stay in their own homes longer. Just 12 to 20 hours of caregiving a month can help people stay in their own homes 2 to 5 years longer. NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade shared that we are working with more contractors to prepare for the services beneficiaries will need including meals, caregiving, and home modifications. A suggestion was made to reach out to the Fire Departments in the rural communities as they often go out to help the older population.

b) Proposed Staffing Adjustments

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade discussed the need to add 1 Long-Term Care Case Management FTE. In addition, there was discussion about adding a Care Coordinator for the Jail Health Program, which is on the next Whatcom County Council Agenda. Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu provided an overview of potential changes in medical services for the jail. NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade informed the Board that NWRC is very close to moving forward with the SUD program in Whatcom County.

Motion was made by San Juan County Councilmember Christine Minney and seconded by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning to authorize the proposed addition of 1 FTE in the Long-Term Care Case Management unit, effective April 18th, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

c) Proposed Premium Pay for Interpreters

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade provided a general overview of the need for bilingual staff to better serve some of our client populations. She informed the Board that we currently have staff that informally fill this need.

Motion was made by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning and seconded by Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon to adopt a 4% premium pay for certified social services interpreters, effective June 1st, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

d) COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

NWRC Executive Director Amanda McDade provided an overview of the changing landscape around COVID-19 since the end of the pandemic, including Governor Inslee rescinding Directive 22-13.1 which required State employees to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

Motion was made by San Juan Councilmember Christine Minney and seconded by Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremmer to authorize the revocation of the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, no longer requiring new employees to provide proof of vaccination upon hire, effective May 1st, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

e) Vice-Chair

The board discussed the need for a Vice-Chair and nominated Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremmer. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session

An Executive Session was called at 11:35 am to discuss potential upcoming litigation. The Chair estimated the session would last up to 15 minutes.

The regular board meeting reconvened at 11:58 am.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:58 am.

Prepared and submitted by:

Darla Smith

Darla Smith, Administrative Manager