

**MINUTES OF THE
NORTHWEST REGIONAL COUNCIL
December 18, 2025**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair, San Juan County Council Member Jane Fuller, San Juan County Council Member Kari McVeigh, Whatcom County Council Member Mark Stremmer, Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning and Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen

STAFF: Amanda McDade, Sarah Silvas, Darla Smith, Holly Fletcher-Love, Katie Dubec, Shu-Ling Sun, Mariah Davis, Hadassah McGill

PUBLIC: none present

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by San Juan County Council Member Jane Fuller.

There was no public comment.

There were no announcements.

Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning and seconded by San Juan County Council Member Kari McVeigh to approve the Consent Agenda items a – f; Approval of the Minutes, July 17, 2025; Approval of June, July, August, September, and October 2025 Expenditure Listings; 2025 Budget to Actual Report; Annual Internal Fiscal Systems Review, and Routine Contracts and Amendments. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

Executive Director Amanda McDade provided:

- A legislative update, including the upcoming advocacy focus for 2026, which is Health Homes. The Healthcare Authority has put Health Homes into their decision package to extend funding. We have been gathering information and data about the cost savings and success of the program with the goal to get Health Homes into the permanent budget for the State.
- Agency updates: Amanda McDade has been the acting Clinical Director for the past year, and this will continue into 2026 as the position is tied to the outcome of Health Homes which is under NWRC's clinical department. NWRC will not recruit for a new Clinical Director until we are certain that Health Homes is funded. The second major update is that the Tribal Program Specialist Position is currently vacant. We are taking time to re-evaluate this position and meet with some of our local tribes to learn what supports are most helpful. We are re-writing the job description to remove anything outdated or unclear.
- A funding review: Amanda McDade shared the significant changes for NWRC funding including: the jail contract ended earlier than anticipated, the Older Americans Act carryover elimination funding, the dementia funding cut from the last legislative session, and Skagit County's discontinuation of the Recovery Care Coordination program at the end of 2026. NWRC is hopeful that we can find funding

streams for Recovery Care Coordination to ensure it continues at the end of the year. With the jail contract ending, NWRC had to pay out vacation balances for 12 staff members, and we are still assessing the impact of this.

WA Cares is coming in 2026 and contracts have been signed and sent out. Title 19 case management continues to grow as our population grows. Additional 1115 Medicaid waiver funding is coming our way and that is largely nutrition, home adaptations, and respite care, including administrative dollars for our staff to carry it out, and will run through 2027 only. NWRC is now in a place to expand its Behavioral Health Program and can begin recruiting for a Whatcom behavioral health clinician. Mid-year we are hoping to hire an Substance Use Disorder Professional for Skagit. We are also adding supported employment through the waiver program, which means we'll be able to support populations who want to work and can work. This should help with the mandatory employment requirements of Medicaid.

Council Member Fuller asked about the future budget in 2027 and if there were any concerns. Amanda McDade shared that the waiver funding ending is a concern, however, WA Cares is coming and is untouched by the Federal and Statewide budget crisis. Health homes is also a large piece to our budget that we will hopefully solidify into our state budget and no longer be a concern for 2027.

Regular Agenda

a) NWRC 2026 Budget, Resolution #25-02

Executive Director Amanda McDade reviewed the overall budget including the 3% COLA for staff and new funding streams that help NWRC to remain in the black.

Motion was made by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning and seconded by Whatcom County Councilmember Mark Stremler to accept the 2026 budget Resolution #25-02. Motion passed unanimously.

b) Proposed Policy Updates

Executive Director Amanda McDade provided a brief overview of the changes to the policy manual for 2026. There was some discussion around the process involved in the policy changes including how NWRC garners staff feedback. There was further discussion about the 'pets at work' policy to ensure NWRC is considering allergies, service animals, and different cultures that cannot be around dogs.

Motion was made by San Juan County Councilmember Kari McVeigh and seconded by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning to adopt the policy changes as presented effective January 1, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

c) Nominations & Elections of Officers and Executive Committee

The board discussed the need for an appointed Chair and Vice-Chair for 2026-2027.

Motion made by Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair and seconded by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning to nominate San Juan County Councilmember Jane Fuller for Chair and Whatcom County Councilmember Mark for Vice Chair for the upcoming term. Motion passed unanimously.

d) Reappointment of Advisory Board Members

The board reviewed the requests for several advisory board members from Island, San Juan, and Skagit Counties to be re-appointed for another three-year term.

Motion made by Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning and seconded by San Juan County Councilmember Kari McVeigh to accept the re-appointments. Motion passed unanimously.

e) Proposed Meeting Schedule

Proposed governing board meeting dates were shared for 2026 and there were no concerns or changes.

f) WA Cares Program Updates

Mariah Davis provided a detailed overview of the WA Cares Program including the projected timeline, covered services, benefit amount, and how to apply.

Announcements

None made.

Executive Session

An Executive Session was called at 2:27 pm to discuss the Executive Director performance review. The Chair estimated the session would last until 2:40 pm.

The executive session ended at 2:40pm and the regular board meeting reconvened. The board paid compliments to Amanda McDade's leadership as Executive Director at NWRC.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:44 pm.

Prepared and submitted by:

Katie Durbec

Katie Durbec, Agency Administrator