



330 Pacific Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
www.communityactionskagit.org
(360) 416-7585

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

November 20 2025, 5:00pm

In attendance:

Members of the Board:

Public Sector:

Melissa Beaton – present

Ron Wesen – not present

Danny Hagen – present

Ash Gregorius – not present

Private Sector:

Kate Bennett – present

Silvia Reed – present

Gregg Davidson – present

Morgan Curry – present

Carl Young – present

Client Sector:

Jamie Thornberry – not present

Tina Tate – not present

Kati Ortiz – not present

Heather Wallace – present

Loly Gomez – present

Staff: Bill Henkel, Sandi Phinney, Ayumi Orthmeyer, Melissa Self, Robert Queisser

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Gregg Davidson called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

QUORUM PRESENT

II. CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes from the October 23, 2025 Board of Directors Meetings

Correspondence: Skagit Valley Herald: Local seniors find support, community at resource fair; CSBG Letter to Sen Patty Murray (also sent to Rep Rick Larsen and Sen Maria Cantwell); Skagit Valley Herald: As SNAP benefits run to a halt, community members search for solutions; Email from Within Reach: Immediate Suspension of Performance – Due to Federal Funding Impasse and Government Shutdown; Email to Skagit Community Foundation: Food Bank numbers YTD 2025; Letter: Commendation from WA Dept of Veterans Affairs; Invitation to Concrete Community Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony!; Email from Silvia Reed- regarding Christina resigning from the board; Edgewater Park Clean Up write up

Division Reports: Melissa Self, Jazmin Flores and Sandi Phinney, Elizabeth Jennings, Taylor Babcock, and Michele Metcalf

Motion to approve the consent agenda made by Melissa, seconded by Kate. Passed unanimously.

Gregg pulled out for discussion the consent motion on board member Jaime Thornberry. He said that there has been substantial effort at making contact with Jamie, who was able to attend only one in seven Board meetings this year. Kate did exchange emails with her, but she was not able to answer the questions about being able to continue on Board service. Though it appears she is not able to participate on the Board, we hope she is able to continue serving on a committee, such as CREAT or the Housing Work Group. Bill reached out and left a phone message for her too to make sure she knew there would be a motion this meeting. Gregg explained the provision in the bylaws about minimum attendance. Because we've had some challenges with quorum and because we want to have representation of all voices on the board, it's important to maintain both participation and communication. Bill also highlighted that Christina has resigned from the Board, but will also hopefully stay engaged as a committee member, especially on LAC and CREAT.

Motion to remove board members Jamie Thornberry from Board service (due to lack of participation) made by Carl seconded by Kate. Passed unanimously.

III. DISCUSSION AGENDA

6. Finance; Hagen, Orthmeyer

Ayumi reviewed this month's Finance Report (thru September), which does not include \$5,600 of revenue from FCS Employment, and has a modest loss for the month of \$21,202 (or negative \$15,602 adding back in FCS employment revenue), and an overall positive year to date number of \$263,033. Danny surmised that \$21,000 monthly loss is fairly expected, after so many positive months, and because of the normal timing issues. He said the good news is that the budget is still accurate, and we're still in solid positive footing for the year. Note that next month, October, may not include WIC and Basic Food Education because we have not been able to bill for them during the federal government shutdown, so we may expect a negative number in October as well. We hope that will even out in November, depending on the speed that certain federal funding streams like WIC ramp back up. It is worth noting that the Donor Development efforts have really paid off, and we are already at 100% of the goal for unrestricted revenue, even before our end of year campaign, which begins November 1. The Donor Development committee and team is also working on a donor's circle with tiers of giving, which will be introduced to the public later.

Danny also reminded the Board that the agency's 990 for 2024 has been completed and submitted to the IRS by our auditor and shared via email to the full Board. The Board acknowledges receipt.

Motion to approve the November Finance Report (thru September) made by Loly, seconded by Kate. Passed unanimously.

7. State of the Agency; Henkel

Bill reminded the Board that our December meeting will be in person, and thanked Silvia for offering to host it at the Mount Vernon Chamber office (with a virtual call in option). Rumor has it that there will be tamales to share! Bill said that it's been quite a month, especially with the historic government shutdown, the longest in US history, and all the impacts and uncertainty from that. Bill reminded the Board that many of our federal funding streams had at least a limited cushion at the state level. WIC was the biggest challenge, because of the uncertainty regarding its contract and limited state level buffer, and its \$70-\$80,000 burn each month. But we wanted to keep the WIC team working as long as possible, as we knew that there were direct service WIC vouchers through at least Thanksgiving, and we had reassurance from the state Department of Health that we'd be reimbursed later for WIC

eligible expenses, even if we had no official contract guaranteeing that reimbursement. Perhaps the highest profile stressor on local families was the pause in SNAP benefits starting November 1, and the confusion caused by their reinstatement, then pause again. The scale of this issue and impact of the stress and confusion was huge: In Skagit, 15,744 people rely on SNAP. Another concern was the firing of federal agency employees from several agencies, including the Office of Community Services, which administers LIHEAP, CSBG and other key funds for our Community Action network. The final deal that re-opened the government on November 12 was a “Continuing Resolution” that locks in last year Congressional funding through January 30 (and SNAP and some other key benefits through September 3). This CR also re-instated the RIF-ed federal employees, an essential step to actual getting out federal funds to communities. The CR also included a promise that the Senate would at least vote on Affordable Care Act health care subsidies (notices had gone out at the beginning of November of the looming end of these subsidies, if no action is taken, which would significantly increase health insurance coverage costs for lower income families across the country).

In terms of good news, Bill shared that our Veterans assistance team was nominated for an Outstanding Service to Veterans team award from the WA State Department of Veterans Affairs and the Governor’s Veterans Advisory Committee, a tribute to the outstanding work our staff has done over the years, especially through Skagit Vets Connect. He also said that not only did we hit our fundraising goal for unrestricted funds prior to November 1, but the first two weeks of November pushed us over the top for our overall fundraising goals, including for targeted program support. In the face of the stress, chaos and confusion of the government shutdown, the community really stepped up and into supporting people and organizations. There have been many people to call and thank! Perhaps, too, we’re beginning to shed the label of “best kept secret.”

Bill also shared that Melissa Self has been working on an MOU with United Way around the Diaper Bank and the diapers stored at the Food Distribution Center, to set parameters about the amount of space we can devote to diapers, given the central purpose of the center, and the amount of extra time and effort needed to move food when there is a stockpile of diapers that don’t move over time. Because of the staff and space costs involved; we asked them to write us in to future grants or contracts, as well as to acknowledge us publicly as partners, as they do the diaper distribution partners. Bill also shared an overview of major staffing reductions at the county, including and especially in Public Health. One of our key contacts there, Kristen Ekstran, was among those positions eliminated. Kristen has been a highly regarded facilitator of the collective effort, the Skagit Population Health Trust. Commissioner Browning called Bill to confirm commissioner support for Population Health Trust, despite this staffing reduction.

8. Potential expanded role in food and nutrition; Henkel, Self, Queisser

The County has indicated it will not re-apply for the local Senior Nutrition and Meals on Wheels contract, which is a major shift for our community, and has many concerned about the future of that service to our growing population of seniors, especially without the county’s significant yearly contribution to that effort. The switch to a new provider, if one is identified, would be July 1 of next year. Northwest Regional Council, which hosts the contract for this service, has indicated it will release a Request for Proposals in January, and has just released a Request for Interest (RFI), to see which organizations might be considering an application. Though this contract would be a significant lift for us or any organization, we acknowledge how critical this service is to our senior population, and we are thus exploring, fact finding, meeting with other possible stakeholders, and doing our best to research what it would take, given the information that has been released thus far.

As we analyze this opportunity, we are fortunate to have recently hired Rob Quiesser as our Mobility and Senior Services Manager, who has been handling a significant amount of our fact finding. Rob said that he was just coming out of a meeting with Renee, who has managed the program for years at the County, and Board members for the Skagit Council of Aging (SCOA), who expressed support and encouragement for our application. Renee shared some info on how the county staffs the program, as well as some of the basic requirements, such as the required assessment of each senior that has to be renewed each year. Keeping up with compliance (food, safety, nutrition, etc) also takes up a lot of time. About 7-8 FTEs support the program in providing 184,000 meals/year, split between congregate meal setting (about 1/3 of the meals) and Meals on Wheels deliveries (about 2/3). SCOA currently does significant yearly fundraising for the program, and has pledged to do so in the future for us or

whoever is the provider. It appears that \$1.1 M of the \$1.7 budget comes in from NWRC contract, and that the county currently subsidizes the program heavily (in addition to SCoA's fundraising and certain grants). The County has indicated that they would provide \$250,000 the first year to a new provider, but only for one year, not an ongoing commitment. There's also an expectation that a new, nonprofit partner would be more efficient and cost effective, though Kate put in a word of caution about expecting nonprofits to do "less for more," when often our costs are similar or the same. It is possible that some costs could be saved by decreasing the number of times per week hot meals are delivered (currently 5 days a week, and frozen meals for the weekend), though the in person deliveries are often a rare point of human contact for homebound seniors, and these welfare checks can be quite essential to a senior's wellbeing. There's also a schedule of capital items that would be transferred to a new contractor, including a hot/cold delivery truck.

Carl wondered if a temporary ad hoc Board committee would be useful to look at all implications for the organization, and Gregg wondered if that could be accomplished by the Board Executive Committee during its regular meeting. The timing is also a pressure point, as the RFP would be released in January, with a likely timeline of March or April submission (and July 1 startup). This would also be a heavy lift for donor development, as well as our volunteer management capacity. No matter what we do, we'll need to be realistic about the capacity needed, as well as the significant risks, such as to the agency's reputation if we aren't able to sustain a program as costly and under-funded as this, as well as the risk to our agency's finances. All agreed that it was both an essential service for seniors, and a major lift for any organization. Morgan said that she understood that, but couldn't see another local organization having the capacity for this, and thought Community Action was the most natural fit, and needed to step up as best we could. Success would be predicated on partnerships – with an array of funding organizations and individuals, the Skagit Council on Aging, the City of Burlington, etc. Ideally, the County would consider a financial commitment over multiple years, given the cost and complexity of this service, the many unknowns, and the quickly approaching transition. One key next step is to determine the information the Board would need to prepare to make a decision. An informational session in early December with the NWRC may also be helpful in clarifying information, and to see what other organizations might be considering an application as well.

9. Board Planning and Engagement; Bennett, Davidson, Phinney, Reed

Sandi gave an overview of the vision, mission, values, equity statement review and status, as well as the status of the strategic plan and the 2026 Work Plan.

In terms of 2026 Board officer recruitment and nominations, Gregg is rotating off as president, and Kate will be stepping back from her role as our current Vice President, so we are having discussions with other potential nominees. Silvia has also stepped in to take the lead on guiding this year's Evaluation of Bill, and she gave an update on the process. A survey was sent out to Board and core management staff, and Mindy our HR Director will receive and then share the results with the team. The review committee will then meet with Bill to go over the results, and reflect on the year past and year to come, prior to the Board's final review and vote at the December Board meeting.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

IV. ADJOURN: Meeting adjourned at 6:28pm.

BOARD REVIEW & APPROVAL:

Approved as submitted

Approved with changes noted below

x

Board Secretary Acting Board Secretary

Date Signed