

# Mt. Baker Foundation Partnership and Planning Meeting Minutes

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
EAST WHATCOM REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

## In attendance

Greg Winter, OC  
Jessica Bee, EWCC, CVCC, OC, MBCC, CVPRD  
Richard Whitson, EWCC, CVPRD  
Cheryl Thompson, EWCC  
Shorty Bjornstad, EWCC  
Carl McDaniel, CVCC, MBCC, CVPRD  
Rebecca Cayen, EWCC  
Rebecca Boonstra, EWCC, CVPRD  
Wa'Lynn Sheridan, MBCC, CVCC  
Kristi Slette, WFCN, CVCC, MBCC  
Aly Robinson, WCHD, MBCC, CVCC

*EWCC: East Whatcom Community Council*

*CVCC: Columbia Valley Community Connections*

*OC: Opportunity Council*

*MBCC: Mt. Baker Community Coalition*

*WCHD: Whatcom County Health Department*

*CVPRD: Columbia Valley Park & Recreation District*

## Mission/Purpose of Orgs Present

**Greg** spoke to the mission of the *Opportunity Council*; both providing services to improve health and wellbeing as well as advocating for just and equitable communities. Stated the OC would support whatever the community wants.

**Kristi** spoke to the mission and values of *Whatcom Family and Community Network*. WFCN's mission is focused around building strong, resilient communities; collaboration, leveraging assets, and building community capacity are at the forefront of their work. Shared about the CVCC meetings, process for collecting what is growing strong and what are the hopes and dreams for the Foothills region. Then celebrating as hopes and dreams become reality.

**Wa'Lynn** introduced the *Mt. Baker Community Coalition* work; focus on leveraging community assets to address substance misuse and mental health promotion for youth. Some goals include reducing community disorganization and reduce availability of opioid drugs through public awareness, environmental strategies, and implementing evidence based direct services.

**Rebecca B.** gave an overview of the role and mission of the *East Whatcom Community Council*. The EWCC serves as the Board of Directors for the EWRRRC, identifying community needs and strategizing ways to meet those needs. In addition, the EWCC is a conduit/liaison between the functions of the EWRRRC and the community at large.

### **Conversations with Mt. Baker Foundation**

Greg began with his conversations with Mt. Baker Foundation, shared their interest of community engagement and how community members can participate in community decisions. MBF has a desire to connect and engage in a better or deeper way. Greg also expressed MBF's interest in understanding how community engagement happens and is best done.

Rebecca shared that MBF had come to the EWRRRC, walked around the space, and shared the history of the building, with great interest and excitement.

Kristi met with MBF to talk about the work WFCN is doing regarding community capacity building and connection and the different communities they are focused (Roosevelt, Columbia Valley, Birchwood). Stated that if MBF was interested in providing large sum of money WFCN could house and administer funding to projects/programs in smaller sums as the community sees fit.

Jessica spoke with MBF members in a few of her roles. They attended EWCC meetings for a while, Parks District meetings, and CVCC.

### **Requests of MBF**

It is understood that Mt. Baker Foundation had a few requests

1. MBF wants to see coordinated effort and understanding between community groups
2. Broader community engagement (and specific outreach to vulnerable populations)
3. Provide space/process for new opportunities or ideas to be shared

### **Engaging Residents and Convening Community**

Spoke about the barriers and challenges re: community engagement. *See below.*

- Outreach/community engagement in some areas
- Capacity
- Who's role to engage community?

### **Major questions that arose:**

- Need to define community: all of East Whatcom/Foothills? Just Columbia Valley?
  - Priorities/needs of Columbia Valley may be very different than Maple Falls or Glacier, Acme or Van Zandt.
- What is the expected timeline from MBF?
- Who will be conducting the community engagement/outreach work? We can reach out to our contacts, but additional time/energy needs to be spent in the different areas. Or do we rely on

community leaders in each area to bring us the ideas/concerns/ needs of the different Foothills areas? Could part of MBF support be to hire an E. County projects and communication coordinator—limited contract position?

**Barriers to community engagement**

In East County, intense and targeted efforts to engage with vulnerable and harder to reach populations have occurred. We have found challenges and experienced limited success. Multipronged approaches to reach various groups work best and there are likely ways and connection points we may not have made yet. Finding the access points is a focus for the future.

**Reach:** Concerns about reaching vulnerable populations and communities in the different regions (for example: Russian/Ukrainian populations in Kendall and Acme/Van Zandt residents; Spanish speaking community; those in the state of homelessness). Some in Columbia Valley may not wish to be reached.

Proposed Solution: Start with connections we have, grow as needed (Shorty at Fire Hall, Katrina at Library for Acme area, Matthew in Van Zandt, etc). Engage more with churches, food banks, other places where vulnerable populations connect for support.

**Scope:** Sense of community members being very busy and time constrained

Proposed solution: scope of the work and expectations for community participation will have to be outlined as recruitment occurs. On-line access for after-hours engagement. Multi-pronged approaches that show up where the residents show up.

**Timeline:** Importance of providing data/response/funding back to community in a timely manner if broader community is involved. Possibility of loss of interest or disillusionment if community doesn't see work being done or benefit of their involvement (or is unable to connect work with their input).

Proposed solution: create a community engagement plan.