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## PHT Meeting Minutes November 3, 2022/8:30am Skagit Station Meeting Room

**Members:** Thomas Boucher, Patty Codd, Sonia Garza, Bill Henkel, Kenneth Lawson, Maureen Pettitt, Margaret Rojas, Lyndie Simmonds, Dean Snider, Ismael Vivanco

**Community Stakeholders:** Polly Dubbel, Sarah Hinman, Jennifer Sass-Walton

**Ex-Officio:** Peter Browning

**Staff:** Kristen Ekstran, Melissa Doss

**Guests:** Silvia Reed, Kat Lohman

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### Welcome

Kristen welcomed everyone and started the meeting by acknowledging Maureen Pettitt's Birthday. Maureen then summarized the agenda for the day. She mentioned her appreciation for the presentations given at the last meeting and how inspirational the work is that they do.

### North Star update

Sarah said the Advisory Committee met a couple weeks ago and went over topics regarding care coordination, access to behavioral health services, access to housing, and then went into a deeper dive on how housing availability and affordability is related to rates of homelessness in a community. Then the committee discussed care coordination platforms. Sarah ended her update letting the group know there is another meeting scheduled for next month.

As a refresher, and for the new members Kristen went over the history of the "Equity Journey" within the Trust and where it originated. Starting back in 2019, through a series of facilitated conversations, trainings, and workshops the Trust started working on their vision. She noted that within the Guiding Principles there is a "Three-part Vision" including:

1. What Health Equity means, what we hope for, and what we want to see within the community.
2. How we do that work. (Kristen quoted the Core Equity Statement).
3. Our commitment to each other. She noted we are all on our own personal equity Journey and reminded us to respect and honor that.

### Equity Panel Discussion/Conversation

Kristen welcomed panel members. She asked them to introduce themselves and tell the group a little about their organization and position within. Dean Snider with the Skagit Valley YMCA started by saying they have 175 employees currently with three branches to their organization. They are: 1) health & wellness side - the Hoag Road Fitness Facility, ie. "swim and gym" 2) childcare – the Y is the largest provider in Skagit County and 3) Social Impact, for which Kat Lohman is the Executive Director.

The Y has early learning and school-age centers in Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Anacortes. They are also engaged in Pre-School partnerships with the Sedro Woolley School District. There are more than 400 families involved in their childcare branch. On the social impact side, there are many different community outreach programs that deal with youth homelessness/prevention and education, youth housing, and substance abuse education. Examples are the Oasis Emergency Shelter, The Daylight Center, and MV Hope (Mount Vernon: Healthy Outcomes through Prevention Efforts).

Dean touched on several aspects of Equity within the YMCA, as well as the history, past tensions, and the need for education and community involvement. He also mentioned the current cultural diversity within the Skagit County YMCA Board Members. Kat Lohman mentioned the same tension between what they want to do, noting the membership model, and bridging gaps in the community. She feels they have achieved success in bridging the gaps with the Oasis program. She said, "it's unique for a YMCA to operate any kind of residential services. In Washington State, it's just YMCA of greater Seattle and us that have community housing services. This is not easy work. It is going to be uncomfortable. I think the language that is used when talking about inequity work, in general, is about a broken system but I think many of them are operating out of design and were often not founded to serve certain folk in our community. Because of that we must lean it to that discomfort of pushing back and changing things in an inconvenient way. We are on a journey, we have made improvements, and there is a lot of incredible work that is being done".

Kristen introduced Bill Henkel, Executive Director of Community Action of Skagit County. He began with the history of Community Action, described some of the services they offer, mentioned the challenges and obstacles regarding equity in the past and how far they have come. He stated that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work is at the Board level, the community level, the staff level, and at the services level. He then introduced Silvia Reed, Community Action Board Member, MV Chamber, she explained how she got involved with Community Action through a personal experience. She said that the volunteer she first met gave her peace of mind during a very tough time and then after that they asked her to become a part of the board to hear her opinions and gain her perspective as a Latina. She explained that it is a learning process and one that she takes very seriously. She is very proud of the work they have done and the things that have been accomplished during her time on the Board.

### **Meeting summary/Updates and Planning**

The meeting moved into a conversation involving different perspectives and some personal stories of members own experiences with some of the topics in today's meeting. Kristen opened the remaining time up for questions and conversation. Some take-aways provided by the Y and Community Action included:

- It's important to learn "in partnership". Both the Y and CAA utilized their boards, partner agencies and other groups they collaborate with to learn about the equity needs of those who are served. Questions such as "how do we serve?" and "how do we serve better?" can direct some of the service-oriented learning.
- Those same partners can be consulted when tough situation arise. We don't need to do this work alone
- It's important not to run away from conflict. We need to find where values align and learn together. Difficult conversations have to happen in order to get to an understanding of values.
- Look for ways to agree (on a safe, healthy community, for example) and encourage people to turn down the dial on anger.
- Be care about who you tap for the hard work. It shouldn't always be those in underrepresented communities.

- White leaders have to have a constant awareness that others have such different experiences, think about how to balance power dynamics and hand over power.

Kristen ended the discussion by outlining upcoming topics and presentations, as well as going over the next few months schedule. She also mentioned the meeting in February will be hosted by the Swinomish partners at the Swinomish Casino. She promised to email updates and ended the meeting with a thank you to the panelists for their great work and giving us their time today.