



# City Council Agenda Bill

20387

**Bill Number**

**Subject:** Update on the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence's work in the community

**Summary Statement:** The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence presents annually to the Bellingham City Council regarding domestic violence problems and trends, and the efforts of the Commission to address these issues. This session consists of this annual briefing.

**Previous Council Action:** n/a

**Fiscal Impact:** \$54,000 provided by City of Bellingham in 2014

**Funding Source:** Pass through of U.S. Department of Justice Grant

**Attachments:** none

Meeting Activity	Meeting Date	Staff Recommendation	Presented By	Time
Committee Briefing Information Only	4/21/2014	Information Only	Susan Marks	15 minutes

**Recommended Motion:** .

**Council Committee:**  
Committee Of The Whole

**Agenda Bill Contact:**  
Mark Gardner

Reviewed By	Department	Date
<i>Cathy Lehman</i>	Council President	03/31/2014
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<i>Peter M. Ruffatto</i>	Legal	04/14/2014
<i>Kelli J. Linville</i>	Executive	04/15/2014



## April 2014

The Commission consists of 14 government and 14 community members. Government officials are designated by government position. Community members are selected by the Mayor and the County Executive from among members of the community who have an interest in, or are impacted by, domestic violence.

### (14) Designated Government Representatives

<u>Term Exp.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Community Position</u>
January 31, 2015	Mayor Gary Jensen	Designated Representative-Whatcom County Cities
January 31, 2016	Michael Knapp	Selected Police Chief-Whatcom County Cities
January 31, 2016	Linda Quinn	Selected Superintendent-Whatcom Co. School Districts
January 31, 2017	Laurie Alexander	Designated Representative of DSHS/DCFS
January 31, 2018	Mike Riber	Designated Representative of DSHS/CSO
N/A	Bruce Van Glubt	Whatcom County Probation Administrator
N/A	Dave Reynolds	Whatcom County Superior Court Administrator
N/A	Regina Delahunt	Whatcom County Health Department Director
N/A	William Elfo	Whatcom County Sheriff
N/A	Clifford Cook	Bellingham Police Chief
N/A	Dave McEachran	Whatcom County Prosecutor
N/A	Jon Komorowski	Whatcom County Public Defender
N/A	Darlene Peterson	Bellingham Municipal Court Administrator
N/A	Peter Ruffatto	Bellingham City Attorney

### (7) County Community Appointments

<u>Term Exp.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Community Position</u>
January 31, 2015	Manuel Reta	Community at Large
January 31, 2015	Nikki Finkbonner	Human Service Provider
January 31, 2016	Jolie Rhinehart	Major Employer
January 31, 2016	Karen Burke	Domestic Violence Victim Service Provider
January 31, 2017	Mary Dumas	Community at Large
January 31, 2018	VACANT	Health Care Provider
January 31, 2018	Kathy McNaughton	Human Service Provider

### (7) City Community Appointments

<u>Term Exp.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Community Position</u>
January 31, 2015	Darla Woolman	Health Care Provider
January 31, 2015	Michael Sledge	Major Employer
January 31, 2016	Terra Nevitt	Community at Large
January 31, 2017	Sheri Emerson	Human Service Provider
January 31, 2017	Cheri Kilty	Domestic Violence Victim Service Provider
January 31, 2018	Greg Winter	Human Service Provider
January 31, 2018	Rick Qualls	Community at Large



## IT HAPPENED IN OUR TOWN...

### WHATCOM COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW (DVFR):

The Bellingham Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence (DV Commission) and the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) led a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Panel to review three intimate partner homicide cases that occurred in Whatcom County between 2009 and 2013. The 50-member Panel included stakeholders from various sectors of the community, including law enforcement, prosecution, and the courts; social service providers and social workers; domestic violence and sexual assault advocates; faith community leaders; business leaders; and community members at large. For each of the cases, the Panel reviewed information related to the victim and the abuser that spanned their entire lives, up to the point of the homicides. The following information highlights the findings of the Panel.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE IS PREVENTABLE IN WHATCOM COUNTY

#### ABUSERS WERE CONSISTENTLY NOT HELD ACCOUNTABLE

- The criminal justice system did not respond effectively to domestic violence.
- Domestic violence was not routinely addressed in family court.
- Family, friends, and others in abusers' social circles did not intervene to stop the domestic violence.
- To avoid accountability, abusers manipulated their victims and children, along with schools, child protection, and the legal system.

**In each of the homicide cases reviewed, our community had an opportunity to hold the abuser accountable but failed to do so.**

#### THE ABUSE COULD NOT BE STOPPED BY VICTIMS ALONE

- Victims tried multiple times, and in multiple ways, to get help. They called 911, talked to friends and family, and/or left the relationship, but they still weren't safe.
- The reviewed cases made it clear that domestic violence impacts all of us, not just the people in the relationships. Children were killed or left without parents, families and friends were left without loved ones, and entire communities mourned.

**The fatality review team learned that domestic violence victims need the support of the whole community to be safe.**

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**MANY PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT THE ABUSE, BUT DID OR SAID NOTHING TO STOP IT**

- In all of the cases reviewed, victims turned to friends, families, neighbors, coworkers, and/or pastors for help. In most cases, people wanted to be helpful, but didn't know how.
- People who work with kids often had opportunities to help. In all three of the cases reviewed, either schools or social workers knew there was a problem, but didn't identify the abuse or take action to stop it.

**In every reviewed case, someone – family, friends, neighbors, schools, social workers, police, case managers, and pastors – had either a strong intuition or definite knowledge that something was very wrong, and didn't take effective steps to stop the abuse.**

**EVERYONE IN WHATCOM COUNTY HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES.**

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**READ THE WHATCOM COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW REPORT.  
IDENTIFY THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT APPLY TO YOU.  
IMPLEMENT THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS IN YOUR LIFE AND SPHERES OF INFLUENCE.**

**There are recommendations for:**

- family, friends, and neighbors
- faith based communities
- neighborhood associations
- civil and criminal justice agencies and personnel
- mental health, health care, and social service providers
- employers and co-workers
- housing, property management, and real estate professionals
- schools
- child protection