



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Bellingham, WA

October 18, 2013

6 pm to 8:30 pm

Gloria Ochoa,
Chair

Andres Mantilla,
Vice Chair

Lillian Ortiz-Self

Frank Lemos

Sharonne Navas

Anita Ahumada

Eliseo Juárez

Jose Manuel Reta

Nora Coronado

Raquel Crowley

Ricardo Espinoza

Uriel Iniguez,
Executive Director

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Manuel Reta, Lillian Ortiz-Self, Gloria Ochoa, Ricardo Espinoza, Raquel Ferrell-Crowley, Andres Mantilla, Sharonne Navas, Nora Coronado, Eliseo Juárez, Anita Ahumada, Frank Lemos

Staff present: Monica Mendoza-Castrejon, Uriel Iniguez

Introductions:

Commissioners:

- Ricardo Espinoza - representing Tri-Cities, specializing in education and community engagement
- Raquel Ferrell-Crowley – representing Kittias county, specializing in education
- Andres Mantilla – representing King County, specializing in economic development and land use
- Sharonne Navas – representing King County, specializing in education
- Gloria Ochoa – representing Spokane County, specializing in law
- Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self – representing Snohomish County, specializing in education and mental health
- Nora Coronado – representing King County, specializing in health
- Frank Lemos – representing Snohomish County, specializing in economic development for Latino businesses
- Manuel Reta – representing Whatcom and Skagit County, specializing in immigration
- Eliseo Juárez – representing Yakima County, specializing in welfare and public assistance
- Anita Ahumada – representing Thurston County, specializing in social work

The people of the State of Washington have tasked the Commission on Hispanic Affairs with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on issues that affect the Hispanic community of the State.

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Panelists:

- Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District
- Kevin DeVere, Nooksack Valley School District
- Jay Jordan, Bellingham School District
- Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist at Whatcom County
- Derek Pell, Department of Health
- Kyle Dodd, Water Quality Specialist in Whatcom County

Commissioner Manuel Reta thanks everyone for coming out, including community leaders Garry Jensen (Mayor of Ferndale), Greg Holl, Sharon Ortiz (Human Rights Commission), Sister Reta, Bellingham Technical College, thanks to Malcolm Oliver for the meeting space, who is also attending. Thanks the panel members, Steven Neugembauer (Hydrologist), Derek Pell (Dept. of Health) and Kyle Dodd. School Board: Dr. Linda Quinn, Kevin DeVere (Nooksack Valley School District), Jay Jordan (Bellingham School District). Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self thanks Commissioner Reta, and Commissioner Anita Ahumada makes special announcement in Spanish.

Agenda Review:

Chair Ortiz-Self announces that the agenda will be made for this meeting. 3 minutes of official business will be conducted, which will be reviewed. Questions for the panelists' goals and objectives for the night will be reviewed by local Commissioner Reta. Chair Ortiz-Self thanks everyone for coming and the panelists for sharing their expertise. Later there will be an opportunity for public comments. Quick break will happen, where answers to questions will be given

Commission on Hispanic Affairs Official Business

Motion to accept last month's meeting minutes made by Commissioner Sharonne Navas and seconded by Commissioner Nora Coronado. All approved.

Commission on Hispanic Affairs Elections

Second order of business is to elect new chair. Chair Ortiz-Self has been chair for 4 years, there is 4 years term maximum, was glad to represent a group of such talented individuals. As others who have been in the past, has had great pleasure in serving as Chair.

Commissioner Anita Ahumada moves to nominate Gloria Ochoa as next chair and seconded by Commissioner Nora Coronado. Motion was passed through full approval from the Commission.

New Chair Gloria Ochoa takes a moment to thank Ortiz-Self, looks forward to working with her and announces endorsement for Ortiz-Self in 21st legislative district. Expresses desire to see a motion to appoint Commissioner Andres Mantilla as Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Nora Coronado motions to appoint Commissioner Andres Mantilla as Vice-Chair and seconded by Commissioner Ricardo Espinoza. Motion was passed through full approval from the Commission.

New Vice-Chair Andres Mantilla takes a moment to thank Commissioner Sharonne Navas for her work from the last 9 months as Vice-Chair and for her guidance and mentorship.

Chair Ochoa wants Manuel to present the subject matters/issues of the meeting for this night. Commissioner Reta presents the issues of the meeting, expressing strong belief in accountability and reviews the Mission Statement of the Commission. On board for the panel are individuals who have studied and worked with water. There have been issues with water in the past such as the nitrate levels across the state of Washington, particularly in Whatcom County. Secondly, representatives from the Bellingham and Ferndale school districts on the panel. A large percentage of Hispanics are not graduating. Want to know what the schools are helping/doing with the community and it is just fair that we have strong leaders in the field to discuss these issues with the public. Chair Ochoa starts the discussion with the education panel, which features Superintendent Linda Quinn, Principals Kevin DeVere and Jay Jordan.

First question is brought up by Chair Ochoa, asking what is the school doing to improve Latino education rates and the achievement gap? Each panelist has 5 minutes. Uriel will be timekeeping.

Panelist Remarks

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Latino graduation rates are at the forefront of the issues discussed. Dr. Quinn is not satisfied with graduation rates which in Ferndale School District are low, between 70 to 72 percent. The most immediate response to this was a “graduation task force” made by DOT. The graduation task force is digging into who is leading the system, making recommendations for the school board in Whatcom County. Everything they are doing is to improve graduation rates. They are starting early and the first school district to commit for all schoolchildren, most recently the board located statistics and realized kindergarten was a little late. They are working on early childhood education programs with the help of United Way, and got a grant from them, working on 3-5 programs. Jumpstart program is introduced for students who did not have any preschool and are just now getting into kindergarten. Kids who aren’t ready for kindergarten early might not have time to catch up. There are other barriers to education. A bullying campaign is going on. Federal grant is there to help issues such as dating violence, which are matters that take away from academics. Want to change the culture of the school district, in addition to task forces. Committees are being created, realized that with the economy they weren’t able to hire teachers, and the work force is far more homogenous than the student body. Until they can do more hiring, the multicultural advisory committee meets on a regular basis to be the eyes and ears; a huge effort is being made to hire more diverse teachers and

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administration in the workforce. In the meantime, members are being engaged from the multicultural committee. A High school graduation coach is Hispanic. Ferndale has the second largest number of Hispanic students (807), with Bellingham having more Hispanic students. 61% of the graduation rates include students who are white, 17% are Hispanic. 14% are Native American (Lummi), 9% are other ethnic groups. 91% are students in all three categories. The Hispanic graduation counselor, Alvaro Vicente, works with Hispanic clubs (MEChA is very active), excited about two Hispanic leadership classes, which are very popular. Young people for celebrating cultures and become part of the solution as role models for younger. Monthly parent meetings held for Hispanic parents to help them navigate the school system especially for second language. Many students declare as second language students.

Kevin DeVere, Nooksack School District

Mr. DeVere is a Principal at Everson Elementary at Nooksack school district. The school district has 25% Hispanic students including ELL-ESL students. Focused in Nooksack through what can be controlled, such as everyday instruction. Main goal is lowering the achievement gap and improving graduation rates. Time and finances are invested in teachers' professional development. His main job as principal is towards what he can work with staff to approach teachers for what they can do. Hispanic and language learners of all ethnicities acquire English as fast as possible. A high percentage of teachers go back to Western Washington University through a grant and there are also teacher trainings to help ELL students. Working on instructions for learning English quickly, need to use this in an academic content. So far is working pretty well with students to speak and read in English. Many struggle with specific academic language that might not be acquired at home, the staff are working to provide students in regular classrooms. They are building up strategies and techniques for accountability and are talking about academic language and ways of thinking for the content. A primary effort is to increase the teachers' instructional capacity and focusing on language development. Development this year and last was focusing on the most vulnerable students, who are language learners and those in poverty, oftentimes these two categories are co-mingled. Along with poverty lines, Kevin DeVere mentions early learning and increased opportunities for preschool students. Many have head start. 99% are filled with Hispanic families; the issue is there is a waiting list for the program, so they have more applicants than they have space for. They are also working hard to engage parents in this. The best way to help a child is to speak to them in Spanish, talk to them in Spanish about math to learn vocabulary used in English. Club de Lectura (small afterschool program), involves high school Spanish speaking students to mentor elementary ones, where they talk to each other in Spanish. Kevin encourages primary language.

Jay Jordan, Bellingham School District

Mr. Jordan is a middle school principal for Bellingham Shutson School where there are many Latino students. Jay emphasizes the need for Bellingham to be involved in the preschool level. Many of the efforts are in elementary schools. Early childhood education includes preschools as well. There had been a conference in Spokane discussing these issues with Dr. Baker, who chairs commissions on education. He has a degree from

Harvard University and shares his work nationally. There is a huge emphasis in this district and of the importance of family engagement. They are supporting families who speak a language other than English, which is important for leaders to create a welcoming space. First importance is to add more bilingual staff. For family engagement, a person has worked tirelessly to connect with Latino families so they feel welcome in the school. There are 35 teachers and 8 staff that speak Spanish. Families have multiple avenues to speak and have conversations about their children. When families have concerns, there are secretaries that speak Spanish as well. With family engagement, many are done in multiple languages. Many things go home in English and Spanish. Report cards in multiple languages as well. Jay wants families to feel involved in the entire process. Children love to be involved in extracurricular activities. School is working hard to provide scholarships for families so kids can be even more involved. Western Washington University works together for a club called Alto for middle school students to apply for a daily half an hour after school time to work with a Western Washington University mentor. Importance of bi-literate students, wants students to be fluent in that capacity. Working hard so that students can read books in Spanish, strengthen language through programs. Has full time-Spanish teacher, also has class called Heritage speakers to strengthen other native speaking language students. To teach them in Spanish and purchasing first, second, third grade books in Spanish to strengthen native language as well as English, important strategy to see what is important in school. Important to be bilingual and bi-literate. Other schools have similar programs and students can take school credits for that. World Language credits to do this.

Chair Ochoa thanks the education panel for their responses and asks the environmental panel what is being done to address the high nitrate levels in the water?

Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist

What is being done about this, panelists will discuss. Specialty is on surface technology and drinking water coming from this. In order for nitrate problem for drinking water, it has to get there somewhere. Expertise goes in through this. Surface water and brown water, looks at characteristics of brown water for contaminants, many different ways of determining what gets in there, nitrates do have certain health problems especially for infants and young children, naturally occurring in nature so hard to trace because of mother nature doing ways of doing so. Lynden is an area where glaciers were once there thousands of years ago. Now it is some sand, this makes a really great place for water to accumulate. Aquifer is where ground water is produced from. These materials are permeable and produce a lot of ground water; many agricultural farms produce water through this aquifer. Ground water is shallow and at the surface. Many gallons are created a minute, is high producing. In a rural area, homes have septic systems put in 40-50 years ago. Human wastes and pneumonia (urea), livestock operations, cattle, dairy (produces manure), manure ponds later, then the manure ponds go through and nitrate is created, shallow water can be impacted. Lots of potential sources for nitrates, and Herbicides are different in nature. What we typically find are not in application, but pesticides for crops. What we find are things that are mixed and equipment is equipped in

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the use of the fields, plane of fields, agricultural sheds, but also other contaminants not in normal studies that are done. Primary gluten scan costs 350 thousand dollars.

Contamination is in waters that are shallow (such as suma sand), Lynden areas north of Ferndale, including several other areas out there.

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Department of Health ensures that WA has safe drinking water. Do you know where our drinking water comes from? We are connected to a municipality, a neighboring system, can spur questions later on. Overview of how the state of WA looks at drinking water systems. The safe drinking water act and state board of health developed minimum standards for all groups to compile with a few points; 1) Looking at water's initial design, meaning operator for whomever does this; 2) Routine inspections of staff; 3) Ongoing water quality of looking for things. One thing to keep in mind of certain perspectives, the system is working for 20 or 25 more people to work with. Most water systems in Whatcom County fit these systems. Smaller systems have initial requirements, but monitoring of these smaller systems is less so. This is done so by design so that it is not so expensive for water systems. Department of Health tries to reach out for communities to see if the monitoring is going well at least to search for nitrate annually (answer that is unsatisfactorily done to work to look to protect ourselves). The problem of observing in Whatcom County, maps can show.

Derek points to maps that are up on the side of the room.

Map on right (lighter green area) shows that near the Canadian border, they are tracing shallow aquifers (Suma aquifer), which lack the confining layer for ultimately making its way to the ground water. Talking about contaminants of concern, Nitrate is one of the biggest of concerns. Some wells in the area have results that go as high as (x) milligrams per liter. An interest for ground water changes rapidly. This changes with the level of nitrates whether through agricultural practices or other matters. Rainfall of utility for nitrate and customers own notice. Do not give water with nitrate about 10 milligram standard to infants, can result baby to not get oxygen, some adults susceptible for these diseases as well, more common with babies though. Other things to touch on are that around the Lynden area due west, they have consistently worked for sustainable solutions for nitrate contamination, east of Lynden working with that as well. Accountability is needed, which they need to know health risks and need to know customers are notified. Finally need to work for solutions.

Kyle Dodd

There are onsite sewage systems. A couple other follow up pointers include a coordinated water plan (other map), asking where water comes from (appropriate map found). The maps shaded in color signify that you are served through a public water system. Map on the right is a map of wells sampled by Nitrate. For wells exceeding acceptable levels of nitrate, look for red dots. The data is gathered through many years. The State Department of health is responsible for early systems. A large percentage of Whatcom County

converses through responsibility of oversight (group B water systems with 3 to 15 connections). Individual and two party wells. A large group of individuals rely on individual wells to serve two homes. We share the same common goal as state Department of Health to make sure people have safe water. Supporting the building permit and division process support, required as quantity and quality for discretionary department use or subdividing plan. They are approving source as far as construction goes. Water quality sample results which nitrate being one of the chemicals noted. If water quality results from the well, the Department of Health sends out notification reminders of the approval, with a fact sheet sent out and mention that the well has initial approval to meet the standards. If water sources are proposed in areas where the standard is exceeded, then treatment systems are proposed to reduce the level of contamination below the matching contamination level for future property levels for notices required on title and ensure that water system operators create good, clean, drinking and usable water with recorded documents of doing so. Derek and Kyle will talk about quality of water and beneficial uses. There is a task force which includes representatives from Canadian and US agencies looking at ways to improve aquifers.

Public Comments

Vice-Chair Andres Mantilla announces that there will be an opportunity for public opinion, with the request of comments directed to the commission. Repeats in Spanish.

Betty Mendoza, local community member

Says in Spanish that there was a case regarding a middle school girl last year, where they took away her music classes without prior notice and put her in others without notification. She already had rented the instruments and when the girl told Betty, it was already too late. She would like the Commission to advise the parents on what to do when cases such as these occur.

Edgar Mendoza, works with Community to Community

Community to Community efforts are to establish access to education, healthy foods and other related matters. Has heard mention of things happening on the ground with the Latino community, including talks of maximum capacity. Personally grew up in Skagit County with a farm working family. Hard to do work at school when you feel the stress that is being put on parents, especially with what is being seen. There is stress that is being put on parents and people of color on local law enforcement in regards to racial profiling which needs to be put in perspective. Need to have an open dialogue of what it means to be a person of color in a predominant Anglo community. Discussion sidetracked often times. Important in the Latino community to have these conversations so Latinos can participate more in the processes to make changes and reform. Edgar hopes that the Commission can take these messages back to the Governor, including other issues.

Lindsay McDonald, High School worker

Ms. McDonald has worked with Latino students for more than 15 years. Works at High School level and sees what happens as graduation approaches. In last few years, Bellingham has made great strides to make it work. Lindsay has two issues to take back to state leaders, one of them being class size. When you are a struggling student and come from a country where you have no adequate educational preparation and 35 kids in class, hard to get the help you need. WA State is 47 in class size, grassroots movement to fully fund education. Class size is an issue for Latino students. 2nd message: Even students who are not FAFSA and after high school. Students need a DREAM Act. Undocumented students have HB 1079, but with no money you can't do it. Students can access further education. Dreamers are our future leaders, fabulous resources for our state. Need to go beyond High school.

Mario Bonilla, local community leader

Mr. Bonilla hopes that the commission urges to give kids to have more than just civic engagement about dates and times, but also practical information about government, especially local government. Mario hopes that schools can have Mayors for the Day and can cycle through the classes where they can attend city council meetings for what they can know and do, and over a period of time can be much more friendly to these students.

Vincent Buys, State Representative

Rep. Buys thanks Commissioner Reta for being a great resource to Ferndale for the Hispanic Community and for being honest with Whatcom County. Rep. Buys wants to work on legislation that supports the Latino community, to work on issues that affect, whether health, work related, etc. Office is open to anyone in Whatcom County to come and discuss how he can best help during legislative session.

Enrique Lopez, local community leader

Mr. Lopez grew up in Skagit/Whatcom County where he lived in a farmworker camp, picking strawberries, blueberries and other hard work. He is Grateful for the Commission in taking questions and concerns in Olympia where the community needs answers. After having worked with Migrant/Farm working families for over 3 years now, one of the concerns being brought up is what is going to happen after DACA is finished. Immigration reform... Many families have questions on this. Many Latinos need information on how to register to vote, a lot of families want more times and meetings with the Commissioners. Enrique wants the rooms to be packed with Latinos asking questions. Students are our future and quality education must continue to be a priority.

Josefina Hope, local community member

Back in June 2013, Mrs. Hope worked for Sakuma Brothers and was hired as a production manager. At the time of hiring, knew that there were a lot of hours and during the harvest was a normal wage but not normal hours. She was working 16-17 hours 7

days a week, then laid her off when service was not needed anymore. She had an accident, slipped over the wet floor and conveyor belt hit her whole head and body, didn't take care of illness, got laid off, was still tired after 6 months. Felt was still aching body. Doctor saw and got a panel with labor industries and saw the case to become closed. Since then has been trying to see a doctor about injuries and tried three times to injure claim. She does not feel this to be fair and wants Commission to help in regards to this situation.

Mayor Jensen of Ferndale, WA

Mayor Jensen has the pleasure of having a wife that works in the Ferndale School District. Ferndale school district has done a great job, wife works in preschools with a large Spanish speaking audience. Jensen has noticed that the best students are those who are Hispanic. Ferndale high school is also extremely involved. Mayor Jensen is working on reducing class sizes and increasing Preschool programs which have a good future. Ferndale has a really diverse community. Diverse leadership, 7th graders students say that they want to be a leader in their community. Negative things, but want to celebrate good things as well. Ferndale is producing students who are doing great things.

Questions/comments from the Commissioners for the Panel

Chair Gloria Ochoa

Chair Ochoa's question is directed towards Dr. Linda Quinn, which is what efforts are being made for the programs to be made available for Latino communities?

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Dr. Quinn reminds that it was mentioned earlier about how fortunate they were to be able to partner with United Way. The purpose is to streamline and make more public the way they get involved in Early Learning. There is a large effort being done in regards to public outreach. There is an Early Childhood coordinator hired by the grant, with several more family and community coordinators being hired as well. They are partnering with connections and the community council in Whatcom County. There is a waiting list with the library system, a variety of ways that parents can get involved as well. They have reached out for licensed daycare in the school district, offering in service with teachers so that when they are working with students and small people to prepare them for school. There has been major outreach to find out which students aren't currently getting preschool experiences, so they are targeting them.

Kevin DeVere, Nooksack Valley School District

Mr. DeVere adds that there are migrant families in the area, with a Migrant person that works with the programs that is out in the community in a significant amount of time, can connect in that way. Early Childhood, Social Work, involved in recruiting and identifying these services.

Commissioner Ricardo Espinoza

Commissioner Espinoza's question involves education, there was something mentioned about 74% graduation rates, and appreciates push to do better. How do you improve the investments targeting Hispanic students? How do you measure what you do so you can approve what you are doing so students can minimize achievement gap, is there something in the strategic plan targeting this as such?

Jay Jordan, Bellingham School District

In Bellingham, the school board has an ends report. Superintendent and staff have to report specifically on achievement gap on different categories. State report card system sees what different districts are doing. They are broken down into different groups, including ways that they are measured. What a school does is that school delegates this and measures how growth in reading and math are based on. Different subgroups provide this as well.

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Washington State is implementing a new teacher and evaluation systems which explicitly call out a student growth system. Part of the evaluation is growth goals which have to be about closing the gap. They are getting very specific about looking at metrics and the impact with what we did.

Commissioner Anita Ahumada

Commissioner Ahumada's question is if there are any efforts to educate people about the content of nitrate and other contaminants in drinking water, and if the outreach is advised in other languages?

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Mr. Pell thanks Commissioner Ahumada about the question regarding advising residents. He brought examples of what the advisory looks like, published both in English and in Spanish. When a utility does exceed standards for nitrate, they require utility to deliver a notice within 24 hours. As soon as a sample is detected with nitrate and there is confirmation, a notice must go out within 24 hours; information is an example of what they must receive. There are opportunities to improve, as well.

Kyle Dodd

Mr. Dodd mentions that with smaller public water systems, they make sites to visit homes that are served and if Latinos reside there, the door hangers are in Spanish to also communicate that. Besides the information there, they don't claim to ensure all bases are being covered. For avenues in the community to how to better notify, they are open to that.

Commissioner Nora Coronado

Commissioner Coronado's question is based off Commissioner Ahumada's. Takes note of how Kyle Dodd mentioned how communities are being notified. But how are apartment buildings notified and ventured to?

Kyle Dodd

Mr. Dodd mentions how the information is given to the applicant, but when they receive ongoing monitor results, they have gone to actual water systems to determine end users. If they do identify a language is needed, they work with that.

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Mr. Pell mentions that for regulated utilities, there is a certified operator to deliver notice and see that it is posted. Relies on certified notifier to make sure they send in a copy. In addition, he mentions migrant worker housing. Another section of the Department of Health states that they do inspections twice a year to check water and if water is safe and if there is nitrate in drinking water, they post it and look in inspections.

Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist

Mr. Neugembauer mentions that there are public water supplies. There exists exempt wells. There is no monitor on with these. Departments don't know they are there. Irrigation of lawns, the Health Department is not involved, no committee involved with it either. There are agricultural wells for irrigation purposes where they have to watch where the water is going. They are dealing with things of nonexempt wells and have to be permitted to see wells out there that are exempt.

Kyle Dodd

Mr. Dodd mentions that the previous statement was what he was referring to. There are other avenues to reach Latino population for those wells. Exempt wells and resources are on their website. When people phone in, they can respond to those questions.

Commissioner Raquel Ferrell-Crowley

Commissioner Ferrell-Crowley's question is for the education panel. They heard a parent speak out about a child having a changing class and not being informed, but mentioning parent engagement, if the education panel can please share how you are engaging with method of choice and mentioning parents as well.

Jay Jordan, Bellingham School District

One way that Shutson Middle School does to engage parents is holding family events, strategy is ELL family nights, families can come and can see the American School

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system, job is to teach what is the state task, why are they being asked to do that, how do you apply to college, what is a FAFSA, etc. Strategy is to teach the school system how to be better informed about it. Another strategy is having people they know they can call when they have questions and to pass on news and having office days at Shutson Middle School and more. Large majority of Latino students can meet and talk with them. Home visits are a key strategy, to meet with families and connect. Families should feel empowered to communicate with the school system. Parents communicate with each other about how they feel; word of mouth is very powerful. The school has a reputation about being listeners and examples of engaging strategies.

Kevin DeVere, Nooksack Valley School District

DeVere mentions about “Coffee with a Principal” which is used to reach out to families in their language and specific information about that. He is encouraging parents to keep speaking to kids in first language as well, and to engage in more literacy.

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Dr. Quinn talks to parents in schools, one of the things discussed is not so much engagement piece, and if they can help, but more how if they have a school system to build on strengths and see the weaknesses. She brings up the example of the girl who was taken out of music and put another literacy class. Students since last year redesigned the middle school program. Kids can still take arts electives. There is intervention for things that need to be done. One thing that needs to be done is one-to-one technology.

Commissioner Sharonne Navas

Commissioner Navas also directs a question to the education panel. The efforts being made to communicate in both English and Spanish are appreciated. What is the process and strategy for parents who are not literate or speak the languages that have a written language?

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Ferndale is using a model in their elementary schools of people who are family community coordinators and certificated teachers. This is a requirement of the job. There are social workers in the school and they are having in an elementary school get to know the families and know about neighbors. This has grown into a resource fair for parents to come to a lot of language learning parents. They are sending letters to them, lots of community resources to get arm around it. Family community coordinators make a connection there. Not perfect, but it works.

Jay Jordan, Bellingham School District

They have hosted English classes for parents. What about the families that are not coming? One strategy to try this year is to have students present at family nights as a way

to connect with community and see if they come to see if students are speaking and share services of schools having there. Will see how it goes.

Commissioner Manuel Reta

Commissioner Reta's question is directed to the water panel. How are local private wells checked? How many times a year, once a year, twice a year... How often?

Kyle Dodd

There is no ongoing force able requirement to monitor wells. Families are encouraged to check their wells. Nitrate every year identifies as very high levels, besides advisory, nothing engaged as such. Mostly education of the matters

Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist

People are responsible for maintaining their own health. Completely exempt those wells that are for livestock watering. You don't have to sit and use measures that the water you are drinking is not going to make you sick. Reverse osmosis will take down with pre-filtering where even minimal matters can be checked. If you have to check water, Health Department can help.

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Mr. Pell wished for a clarification regarding the meaning of exempt wells. There is a legal right to tap water resources in the state. If the well is to be used for drinking water and is regulated across Washington, there is a building permit constructed which is taken care of in the county level. There is not an ongoing monitor. The cost for a nitrate test is about 25 dollars. They do encourage people on their website to take a test. If the results are not there it is advised to call the Department of Health. Health risks involve the bacteria found in water.

Kyle Dodd

Mr. Dodd responds to the question of ongoing water contamination. For private wells the opportunity is to ensure that it is safe at a point for learning/building permits. Is it constructed to a standard over time so that it potentially is contaminated? The private wells on private properties are beyond the initial approval.

Commissioner Eliseo Juárez

Commissioner Juárez has a question for Mr. Pell and calls attention to the map on wall (one with red dots). Question is if there is any racial impact or certain incomes of people according to statistics and if not, will they keep on doing that kind of research?

Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist

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They have conducted studies throughout Whatcom County. Studies do not coincide for who is being effected and with the contaminants in the water. There are many potential contaminants in the water. Primary pollutants are shown in the safe water act and through parameters. Actual number of chemicals are over 10,000. Determining who is getting impacted by contaminated water is very complex.

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Because the water is being impacted, it ultimately impacts everything in the area. Notes that the essence of Commissioner Juárez's question regarding contamination in the drinking water is attributed to people in that impacted area. There is a reportable disease (methhemoglomomebia) - If reported, goes into the health system and the Department can plot automatically. Department is not aware of any such cases. The data is oftentimes mixed up due to comparisons of nitrate and regular water. Health effects can be identified by Zip Code, hard to determine by contamination.

Commissioner Lillian Ortiz-Self

Commissioner Ortiz-Self's question is about the impact of racism and societal pressure to achieve and about the stats in schools given so that teachers can succeed in helping minority students. What professional development for cultural diversity and ELL classes, language acquisition skills and improvment plans are there, and is it a daily conversation for the systems and schools?

Kevin DeVere, Nooksack Valley School District

They are keenly aware that the staff doesn't look like their 'clientale'. In the last several years they have been very focused on cultural competence trainings for entire staff including classified staff to help with the issues that are being discussed.

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

One of Ferndale's commitments is about equity and celebrating diversity. There is an ongoing group of members in the community that are looking exactly at what kind of needs are there. There is a committed school board to develop topics for diverse communities as well.

Commissioner Frank Lemos

Commissioner Lemos' question is a follow up to Dr. Quinn's response. His question is concerning actions that have been taken. Notes that Dr. Quinn mentioned a multicultural advisory committee, mentioned drop out task force, but not graduation. Are those the only two advisory committees in the district?

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

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There is an advisory committee and a task force. The advisory committee consists of widespread engagement. There is one member that specializes in technology, one in multicultural issues, one in safety, one in facilities and one in communication.

Commissioner Frank Lemos

How many people of color are on the multicultural advisory committee? How many times does the committee meet? Are there official meetings, what are the goals and objectives of the committee and how do they measure these goals and objectives?

Dr. Linda Quinn, Ferndale School District

Dr. Quinn notes Commissioner Reta's attendance. They meet from 6-8 pm on the first Monday of the month. There is Steering Committee within it that plans the meetings. The participants roles change and there is always an open door to come in. Cannot give a number for the number of people of color on board.

Nelly, a local community member, states that individuals from many different backgrounds come together to actively participate in the committee.

Commissioner Andres Mantilla

Commissioner Mantilla's question is directed for the water representatives. His is a broader question regarding actions that the state is taking on regarding storm water runoff and Whatcom County's involvement in the state legislature regarding this issue.

Steve Neugembauer, Hydrologist

Mr. Neugembauer notes that storm water is a big issue, and in 1972 when the clean water act was promulgated to its almost current form, and how the legislature has been involved as such. Agricultural run off is not considered to be a form of pollution in the act. Congress created three categories of water. Point source, non-point source, and streams, lakes, and rivers. Point source is considered to be a form of pollution no matter the cause, including when the storm water runs off into detention ponds dumping into lakes and rivers. Treatments in municipality are not required to monitor storm water treatments. There includes in the storm water nitrates, phosphorous, hazardous materials, and more. There is a new mode of handling storm water, which is a low impact design required to be of use. The most popular way of regulating storm water is through infiltration. Point sources are being streamed. Roadside ditches have increased contamination. This is a major issue in Whatcom County.

Derek Pell, Department of Health

Mr. Pell agrees that there is risk there. From his own perspective, the office of drinking water and ground water wells are not finding the kind of contamination that exceed certain standards. Contaminants identified do have risks.

Mr. Dodd notes that Whatcom County has a cleaning program. In 2011 Governor Jay Inslee introduced a Shellfish initiative. Whatcom County is taking a look at water quality stations and the Department of Ecology is monitoring ditches, creeks and surface areas. They are ranking the areas of highest contamination and going through the areas as a team because different agencies have certain jurisdictions over contamination services. Whatcom County is responsible for septic systems failing or not as well as ground water in road side ditches and creeks. Department of Ecology and Agriculture have jurisdiction over manure handling and spreading. There is an idea for a program to simply identify pollution sources and refer them to appropriate agencies to correct them.

In Closing

Chair Gloria Ochoa

Chair Ochoa mentions that the discussion has been very educational. She would like to thank everyone for taking their time and Rep. Buys taking time out of his busy schedule, and for the students speaking up. She is impressed with how active the community outreach is. Chair Ochoa encourages further conversations with these issues.

Commissioner Mantilla has area of expertise on environmental issues and will follow up with water panel. Thanks public member Josefina Hope for bringing up issue regarding labor industry representative and personally knows excellent person to speak with for the process.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Lillian Ortiz-Self and seconded by Commissioner Andres Mantilla.

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.