The meeting began at 2:32 pm. Dr. Gib Morrow began the meeting welcoming Policy Committee members and by giving a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

Next, Dana Bierman, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Program Manager, presented slides regarding the proposed name change of the Syringe Service program. She discussed the background behind the proposed name change and program expansion, stating there is a growing need for a collaborative response to substance use and opioid overdoses. Ms. Bierman noted that the Syringe Services program at the Health District was suspended in March of 2020 and clients were absorbed by partners such as Ostrich Bay Mobile Exchange and Peninsula Community Health Services. As the Health District no longer provides syringe exchange services, Ms. Bierman proposed the program name be changed to Substance Use Prevention and Response, the goal of which is to decrease the burden of substance use in Kitsap County. The revision would allow the program a wider scope to address substance use with a more holistic and upstream approach. Foundational Public Health Services funding, in addition to the Overdose to Action grant, would allow for this expansion and would provide the program with another full-time position, bringing it to two FTEs. If the changes were to be approved, it would increase the opportunities to collaborate with the Youth Cannabis Prevention grant and work collectively to implement primary prevention strategies to youth and would allow the program to pivot with trends.

After Ms. Bierman’s presentation, the committee members discussed the proposed changes. All members involved in the discussion were amenable to the proposed name change and the program revisions that would allow for additional strategies to be utilized. In discussing harm reduction strategies, some committee members were hesitant to provide materials used to decrease health risks to community members (e.g., syringes, safe smoking supplies, etc.). While that is not the program’s plan, consequences should be carefully considered before providing that service to the public.

Next, Ms. Bierman provided a brief update on the Health District’s engagement with schools and the Olympic Educational Service District (OESD). She noted that the Health District is currently meeting with OESD for regular check-ins. OESD had a strong interest in continuing to receive updates from Dr. Morrow and asked that those meetings continue. In the next phase of the work, Ms. Bierman is hoping to standardize the meeting structure in which the first 5-10 minutes would be overarching public health updates, then the remainder of the meeting would be
focused on a topic of the Health District’s choosing. Topics would be based on trends and additional staff would be invited to join the meeting if appropriate (such as school nurses on the topic of immunizations). She concluded the update by stating they hope to make one of these meetings a regional topic once per quarter.

Dr. Morrow moved on to discuss next steps in terms of Resolution 2023-04. He noted that many action items in the resolution are already occurring, but he would like to know if the Policy Committee has other ideas on work the Health District should be doing. If so, they can contact Dr. Morrow or Keith. Dr. Morrow also discussed an opportunity to apply as a host site for CDC’s Public Health Law Program. If selected as a host site, the Health District would receive free legal advice for lawyers interested in public health law and policy fields. Committee members agreed that this would be a good opportunity for the Health District to pursue.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.