

From: Satpal Sidhu <SSidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: RE: Inquiring if Whatcom County is contracting with Sarbanand Farms/Munger Bros. to provide quarters for flood victims
Date: November 23, 2021 at 8:29:49 PM PST
To: "dbobena@yahoo.com" <dbobena@yahoo.com>, [REDACTED]
Cc: Tyler Schroeder <Tschroed@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Council <Council@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Mike Hilley <MHilley@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Bill Elfo <BElfo@co.whatcom.wa.us>, Jed Holmes <JHolmes@co.whatcom.wa.us>

Dear Dena,

Like I said before, right now the major task in front of County Emergency officials is to get all the flood impacted families in a shelter during the coming winter months. This need is more than few weeks, possibly for many months. We seek help from your group or others to locate long term shelters.

I appreciate your reply email and I have answered the couple of questions you posed below in red.

Thanks!

<p>Satpal S Sidhu BS BSEE MBA Fulbright Scholar Whatcom County Executive</p> <p>Phone: 360 778 5200 ssidhu@whatcomcounty.us 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham WA 98225</p> <p><i>This email is subject to disclosure through the Public Records Act.</i></p>
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From: dbobena@yahoo.com <dbobena@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 1:22 PM
To: [REDACTED] Satpal Sidhu <SSidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Cc: Tyler Schroeder <Tschroed@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Council <Council@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Mike Hilley <MHilley@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Bill Elfo <BElfo@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Jed Holmes <JHolmes@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: Re: Inquiring if Whatcom County is contracting with Sarbanand Farms/Munger Bros. to provide quarters for flood victims

Dear Executive Sidhu:

Thank you for answering my questions. Besides still being opposed to Whatcom County financially supporting a business that has abused workers and has fought

against restoring justice to those workers, I want to respond to one of your responses to me.

In my November 22, 2021 7:00 PM email to you, I asked why Community to Community Development and other farmworker advocates were not consulted about the County potentially financially compensating Sarbanand Farms.

One of your responses to this was, "Can you imagine how many groups in our county would demand to be consulted by County Officials before making such decision during a disaster / emergency periods?"

I ask a question in answer to yours: Have many groups in our county have demanded to be consulted about any other such types of decisions - and have there been other such types of decisions - during this specific disaster / emergency period?

Dear Dana, that is exactly my point: County Officials cannot keep track of public groups or individuals of specific views to consult before making ANY decisions in their line of duty, crisis or otherwise. I read your request that County Official should have guessed that C2C needs to be consulted. Such decisions are made by different officials in different departments all the time, which may not be according to the likings of many citizens. Same is true of Council, many decisions are made in Council contrary to the liking of many citizens.

The mistreatment of workers by Sarbanand Farms was a well-publicized, and well-documented occurrence and farmworker and labor advocates such as Community to Community Development, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, the Northwest Regional Labor Council, who were involved in supporting the farmworkers and their families who were injured, ill, and displaced were also very publicly doing this work. There was wide and prolonged media coverage. It would have been easy to contact them if you needed to.

The incident you mention above was dealt with through proper state channels and brought to final resolution as per the laws of the State. However I don't see how you are connecting that event with volunteer activity during this flood crisis.

My point was that if you had any doubt about whether Sarbanand Farms had been able to meaningfully hold its business accountable and restore justice to those its business had mistreated, you could have contacted advocacy groups who were in direct contact with those people. You could have checked with them to inform the decision you needed to make. I assume you were in contact with people at Sarbanand Farms in regard to this decision. I know there are stakeholders you reach out to about other decisions you have to make. Certainly the groups I pointed out were stakeholders in regard to whether Sarbanand Farms is a party which our County should support.

I also want to respond regarding your closing remark to me, "There is no place for hatred and revenge during a crisis event like current devastating floods."

There certainly is no place for hatred and revenge, ever. I will point out that some people copied on this letter could perceive that you, in your authority as County Executive, believe that I am seeking hatred and revenge. I do this so you won't be saying something like that in response to someone else who is not advocating hatred and revenge. While I am able to stick up for myself and my intent, others could be more more susceptible to being marginalized and discredited by such a remark.

My intent is to advocate for people in power to respect the dignity of people who have been mistreated and abused. This respect should be reflected in our government's actions. For our county to financially partner with a business that has mistreated people in the past and now put other people in crisis in their hands who are in very vulnerable circumstances, from my perspective, is not only dangerous, it sends a message that other businesses and individuals with well-known abusive practices can receive government support without voluntarily restoring justice to those they have abused.

I agree that there is certainly no place for hatred or revenge, ever. The local government officials are merely taking up the volunteer offers from a Munger Bros along with numerous other businesses and individuals to help the displaced flood victims. There is no financial partnership, as you trying to attribute to this arrangement except paying for the minimal cost of operations.

I know you are well aware of how important sheltering options are to me, all the time, not just in emergency situations. But I also seek to not fail to point out the instances of which I am aware when those options pose potential damage to the people in crisis in our community.

Sincerely,
Dena Jensen
Birch Bay, WA

dbobena@yahoo.com

On Tuesday, November 23, 2021, 08:59:53 AM PST, Satpal Sidhu <ssidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us> wrote:

Dear Dena,

Yes, it is true that County is contracting with Sarbanand farms (Munger Brothers) to use farmworker housing for temporary shelter for people and families displaced by floods. The offer to help came from the Munger Bros to help and County is allowing for nominal compensation of around \$200 per month for each OCCUPIED cabin only. Such funds are reimbursable from FEMA assistance.

Yes, I have been involved in making this particular arrangements. And I may be talking to many other farmers with such farmworker housing to use their generosity during this winter to house families for next several months, before they can go back to their homes.

I am not sure that County has a list of debarred farmers or people to volunteer or provide other help during community crisis nor there is any consultation process, as you suggest. This is unreasonable suggestion. Can you imagine how many groups in our county would demand to be consulted by County Officials before making such decision during a disaster / emergency periods?

There are hundreds of farmers who volunteered to help clean up in Sumas and Everson and other areas. Are you expecting that County official should run each volunteers credential through a consultation process, with how many groups, before allowing them to participate in clean up?

Same is true for hundreds of people and businesses, who are donating to WCF for flood relief, should be pre-qualified prior to accepting their generosity.

Please just think, you may be unknowingly hurting the very people you are trying to advocate for. There is no place for hatred and revenge during a crisis event like current devastating floods.

Thanks!

<p>Satpal S Sidhu</p> <p>BS BSEE MBA Fulbright Scholar</p> <p>Whatcom County Executive</p> <p>Phone: 360 778 5200</p> <p><u>ssidhu@whatcomcounty.us</u></p> <p>311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham WA 98225</p> <p><i>This email is subject to disclosure through the Public Records Act.</i></p>
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From: dbobena@yahoo.com <dbobena@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, November 22, 2021 7:00 PM

To: Satpal Sidhu <[SSidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:ssidhu@co.whatcom.wa.us)>

Cc: Tyler Schroeder <Tschroed@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Council <Council@co.whatcom.wa.us>;
Mike Hilley <MHilley@co.whatcom.wa.us>; Bill Elfo <BElfo@co.whatcom.wa.us>

Subject: Inquiring if Whatcom County is contracting with Sarbanand Farms/Munger Bros. to provide quarters for flood victims

Dear County Executive Sidhu:

I had recently been alarmed to see a particular post in one of the numerous social media groups trying to care for our community members who meet challenges in finding social service resources in Whatcom County. The post shared that Munger Bros. was offering housing, formerly used for farmworker housing, to shelter people during the floods. When I had a discussion with the woman who shared this information, they were unaware and disturbed about how Sarbanand Farms had mistreated, and then displaced farmworkers who Munger Bros. had brought here in 2017 on H-2A visas far from their families in other countries.

I have been alerted today to the fact that Whatcom County is potentially working to contract with Munger Bros./Sarbanand Farms to utilize their worker housing for those displaced by the floods.

I am asking in this email today:

Is it true that Whatcom County is potentially arranging to provide funding for Munger Bros. to use their farmworker housing for people who have been displaced?

If it is true the County is arranging to provide funding, have you been involved in these arrangements?

If it is true the County is arranging to provide funding, and you have not been involved in these arrangements, what agencies or individuals have been involved in these arrangements?

If it is true the County is arranging to provide funding, can you explain why there has been no consultation about this with Community to Community Development or other farmworker advocates who had to provide extensive effort and many forms of direct aid to the farmworkers Sarbanand Farms mistreated and/or displaced?

Munger Bros./Sarbanand Farms never issued a public apology for their many actions that were harmful to farmworkers, instead they swallowed up considerable community resources that were needed in order to hold them accountable. Among many injustices they induced, their actions actually forced many workers to be taken in by a neighboring property owner in Sumas, because Sarbanand would no longer house them at their farm. Thus, I cannot condone our County engaging with them in any manner that would permit them to have individuals, in any way, in their charge who are in crisis or in vulnerable circumstances.

I look forward to receiving your answers to my questions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dena Jensen

Birch Bay, WA