

Whatcom County Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

**Tuesday, April 9, 2024
9 AM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING ADJOURNS BY 9:20 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Todd Donovan
Kaylee Galloway
Mark Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, and Mark Stremmler

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, and Jon Scanlon

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2024-228](#) Report from the Parks and Recreation Department

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, read from a presentation (on file) on department accomplishments since October of 2023. He updated on the plantation rifle range site assessment and remediation project and answered what happens if they do not get the 50/50 match grant they applied for from the Department of Ecology for full site cleanup, and where the 50 percent of costs that the grant does not cover would come from. He stated right now they are looking at Real Estate Excise Taxes (REET) 1 funds but balances in that fund may not support it, so those are discussions that are ongoing with the Executive's Office. They submitted a worse-case-scenario number for the grant, but the actual amount is unknown at this point. Even in a best-case scenario, they are looking at millions of dollars of REET money just to do the cleanup and there are also other costs beyond the site remediation.

Donovan asked what the point is of hanging on to the range. He cannot imagine a fee structure that will recoup the costs. Knox stated at this point, they have to clean it up either way so they are moving forward with that part. They also have the need to acquire the property as well and the owner is interested in the County doing that. That would be an additional expense.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated this is a leased property and the lease is up in 2030. They reached out to the owner to get another 25-30-year lease to have more use of the property. They do not have another property to do this function. The owner of the property stated they are interested in doing a swap of property as opposed to a sale. The County could not find any property, but the City of Bellingham may have a property that could possibly be offered as a swap to the land owner, but Knox would know more about that.

Knox stated the City did not move forward with that so they do not currently have a property to swap, and that is why there is a possible need to purchase the property.

Sidhu stated we collectively need to make a decision on what to do. But even if the County has to end the lease, they are still responsible for the clean-up, and that is why they did a consent decree with the Department of Ecology and started the process.

Knox answered where they are with the indoor range and where they see that in the next year or two. He stated the indoor range itself is separate from the outdoor. They have a contractor back on board to complete the HVAC project after a long delay, and they will have to come back to Council for additional funding to complete that. He answered whether they should decide if they are going to keep the property before doing the outdoor clean-up. He stated the likelihood that the site is going to be constrained in the future is relatively high. They do feel that the investments made in the indoor range make it viable in the future.

Christ Thomsen, Parks and Recreation Department, stated one of the commitments they have made to the public and Council is that they would do a feasibility study for future use of the site. Once they are done with the clean-up, the site will be considered just as clean as the surrounding forest. That is the goal and that opens up opportunities.

Knox continued with the presentation on current and upcoming projects.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription