



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council  
CC: Kayla Schott-Bresler, Mark Personius, Matt Aamot, Kimberly Thulin  
FROM: Council Staff  
RE: Proposed process and schedule for Council review of the Comprehensive Plan  
DATE: January 29, 2026

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## Background

The deadline to adopt Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan Update has now passed. While in the past the State has been lenient with counties that demonstrate they are making progress on their plans, it is important to adopt an updated Comp. Plan in compliance with state law.

The Planning Commission completed its final public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan on January 22, 2026. At this meeting, the Planning Commission approved its final recommendations on the Plan, which will be transmitted to Council for review and approval on February 10, 2026. **The following memo proposes a process and schedule for Council review of the Comprehensive Plan.**

## Proposed Process

Council will receive the Planning Commission recommendations attached to AB2026-121 as well as Word document versions of the chapters sent to Councilmembers by email. Council will then address each chapter of the Comp. Plan in sequential order with an opportunity to return to the entire plan at the end to clean up any inconsistencies between chapters.

There are two ways that Councilmembers can propose amendments to the chapters: adding amendments to the table (send to Kiana) or creating a substitute chapter with all proposed changes (this is preferred if there are a lot of amendments). Staff is available to help with both approaches. Generally, Councilmembers must submit any proposed amendments to draft chapters by Monday the week prior to the meeting to allow staff and other Councilmembers enough time to process the amendments. This also keeps PDS and legal informed early as improperly vetted amendments can only be fixed through a long docketing process. If discussion of chapters prompt Councilmembers to think of new amendments, those should be submitted by the Friday before the follow-up meeting.

Council will hold several Special Committee of the Whole meetings dedicated to review of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. During these meetings, Council will hold a special public comment session on all of the chapters scheduled for review before moving into discussion. The public comment session will be limited to 30 minutes and commenters will have 2 minutes each. If commenters do not get an opportunity to speak, they can send written comments to [council@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:council@co.whatcom.wa.us) or speak at the following meeting.
2. After the public comment session, Council will discuss and vote on amendments. Council should make motions to *accept* substitute chapters or particular amendments.
3. Once all amendments are addressed, Council will move to preliminarily approve that chapter. This will signify that Council is ready to move on from this chapter, but it is not a final action.
4. After Council has reviewed all the chapters, Council will introduce the Comp. Plan ordinance, hold a public hearing, and take final action on the plan in its entirety.

## Proposed Schedule

Below is a proposed schedule for review of the Comprehensive Plan, which includes regular Committee of the Whole (COTW) meetings and Special COTW meetings (councilmember availability to be confirmed). This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

- **2/10 – COTW**
  - Receive comprehensive plan submittal from Planning Commission and discuss next steps
- **2/17 – Council Informational Retreat (30 minutes)**
  - Review amendment process
- **2/24 – COTW (approx. 2 - 3.5 hours)**
  - Wrap up UGA discussion
- **3/3 – Special COTW (7.5 hours; 9:00 – 4:30)**
  - CH 1 - Introduction
  - CH 2 – Land Use
  - CH 3 – Housing
    - **Public Comment: Chapters 1, 2, 3**
    - DEADLINE FOR CM EDITS: 2/23
- **3/10 – COTW (approx. 2 - 3.5 hours)**
  - Continue CH 1, 2, and 3
    - DEADLINE FOR CM EDITS: 3/6
- **3/17 – Special COTW (7.5 hours; 9:00 - 4:30)**
  - CH 4 - Capital Facilities
  - CH 5 – Utilities
  - CH 6 - Transportation
  - CH 7 – Economic Development
    - **Public Comment: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7**
    - DEADLINE FOR CM EDITS: 3/9
- **3/24 - COTW (approx. 2 - 3.5 hours)**
  - Continue CH 4, 5, 6, 7
    - DEADLINE FOR EDITS: 3/20
- **3/31 – Special COTW (3.5 hours after Health Board; )**
  - CH 8 – Resources Lands
  - CH 9 – Recreation
    - **Public Comment: Chapters 8, 9**
    - DEADLINE FOR EDITS: 3/23
- **4/7 – Special COTW (7.5 hours; 9:00 - 4:30)**
  - Continue CH 8, 9
  - CH 10 - Environment
  - *Note: CH 11 – Shorelines (council updated in 2024, no changes)*
  - CH 12 – Climate
  - Appendices
    - **Public Comment: Chapters 10, 12, Appendices**
    - DEADLINE FOR CM EDITS: 3/30, (4/3 for CH 8 & 9)
- **4/14 - COTW (approx. 2 - 3.5 hours)**
  - Continue CH 10, 12, and Appendices
  - Final coordination of chapters previously reviewed
  - Last opportunity for edits
    - DEADLINE FOR CM EDITS: 4/10
- **4/28 - Council introduction of ordinance (all chapters)**
  - Final edits in COTW if needed (no further edits after this date)
    - AGENDA DEADLINE: 4/21

- **5/12 – Public hearing and final action on all chapters**

\*Additional possible special meeting dates if needed: 4/21, 5/5, 5/19, 6/2\*