

Whatcom County Council Planning and Development Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

11 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 12:00 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Elizabeth Boyle
Barry Buchanan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jessica Rienstra
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Jessica Rienstra called the meeting to order at 11:07 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, Mark Stremmer, Ben Elenbaas, and Kaylee Galloway

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-194](#) Report from the Planning and Development Services Department

The following people read from a presentation (on file):

- Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director
- Kelly Chamberlain, Planning and Development Services Department

Personius spoke about all types of permit applications received 2016-2025, building permits just in 2025, land use cases in 2025, calls handled by PDS administrative staff in 2025, customer service resources available, building inspections in 2025, the number of public records requests received, department structure and staff, things that Planning has been working on recently, and future challenges.

He answered questions about implementation and compliance with Senate Bill 5290 regarding permit review timelines, the annual permit performance report that was submitted to the State last month, that they are working on finding a way in-house to pull timelines for every single permit, what he would see as the right-sized department for the size of our community and what impact right-sizing would have on the community, how many phone calls come through the main phone queue, if there is anything the Council can do to make sure the department always has a full staff, and if they have strategies for being competitive for hiring staff.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-195](#) Resolution docketing Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation amendments
Lucas Clark, Planning and Development Services Department, read from a presentation (on file) about the docketing process and the 15 new proposals

for the 2026 docket for Council consideration.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, answered if there is staff capacity to accomplish the docket work and how they would prioritize the projects if not. He stated they cannot do it all this year and their priorities are State mandates and legal compliance issues, as well as the two school district impact fees. He also spoke about the process for statutory housing amendments that need to be adopted concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan. He answered whether a property on the north side of Lincoln Road has come to Planning for review, and stated it came through the Comprehensive Plan process but neither the Planning Commission or the Council has recommended including that parcel in the urban growth area (UGA) at this time. His interest would be in changing that UGA reserve from a designation to simply an overlay which would signal that this is an area where this community wants to grow in the future and give a head start to utility providers to start planning and make sure it is in their service area if it is not there now. He spoke about implications if they chose to docket it. He spoke more about prioritization of the docket items.

Elenbaas spoke about proposals he has sent to Planning and asked why proposed code language the Council sends to Planning does not go right into the public process and back to the Council to approve.

Personius stated some things do not get done on the docket because the Planning Department does not have the resources to do them in a given year and some need to go to advisory committees and the Planning Commission for recommendation.

Elenbaas stated his ability to function as a council member is being hampered by proposed code changes dying on the docket. He would request that those proposals go right into the process of review.

Personius responded to the request and also stated there is no deadline for this agenda item and they do not have to make a decision on it tonight.

The committee did not make a recommendation to the Council.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jessica Rienstra, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger