

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
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Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Wednesday, August 6, 2025

1 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 2:55 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2025-512](#) Presentation from Les Reardanz regarding the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)

Les Reardanz, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), read from a presentation (on file). He discussed with councilmembers that the spike in ridership from 2005 to 2009 was attributed to GO lines and WTA going to a universal bus pass with Western Washington University, looking into the legislation introduced in Olympia that would support transit agencies in doing more passenger ferry work and that there would need to be a dedicated funding stream to be able to make that transition, WTA's policies around scheduled drop-offs and pick-ups, possibilities and challenges with using UBER vouchers in place of running busses on challenging bus routes and that UBER is not very cost effective, that expenses are shown in the presentation to be a lot more than revenue for 2025, and that that is because the board said they needed to spend down some of their budget reserves.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-396](#) Discussion regarding Council Office budget adjustments for mid-biennium

Galloway briefed the councilmembers on the file attachments for today's meeting and stated this item is specifically looking at the County Council Office's Supplemental Budget Requests (SBRs) and not the budget for the whole County.

Buchanan spoke about the \$15,000 credit request for Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) Advertising and the \$39,900 expense request for Contractor support for the Justice Project Oversight and Planning (JPOP) Committee. For the IPRTF advertising, he and the IPRTF leadership would like to propose not using the existing budget authority for 2025 but retaining it for use in 2026. For the JPOP contractor support, he stated the ordinance that set forth the ballot measure talks about

JPOP facilitation being a qualified use of levy funding. But then there were agreements made with the cities that they would not spend money outside of construction for the first four years, so they need to have a conversation with the Executive's Office to see what their latitude is there. He stated JPOP really needs that facilitation help for the next biennium and the second half of this one. Galloway asked whether there is interest in bringing the IPRTF Annual Reports in-house and having Council staff do those, and Buchanan spoke about the history of those.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated there would be a possibility of Council staff taking the reports on with content provided by the IPRTF co-chairs. She answered a question about the IPRTF advertising amounts between the two budget years, and stated we currently have \$10,000 allocated to 2025 and \$15,000 to 2026. If the Council chooses to keep the 2026 funding and just return the 2025 allotment, she would need to revise the SBR to reflect the giving back.

Buchanan answered whether returning \$15,000 and retaining \$10,000 for the IPRTF advertising would be enough, and stated he would be fine with that. He answered whether they have explored using jail levy funds for the IPRTF items and stated the advertising would fall outside the scope and he does not know how the reports would fit into that either.

Kimberly Thulin, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, stated her recollection is that it is very restrictive but she is happy to look into it.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated the Council unanimously passed an interlocal agreement regarding the allocation of justice sales tax with all the cities in Whatcom County. There is a clause in the agreement that says, starting in July 2024, the County shall allocate 100% of the County's portion of the sales tax to the design, construction, and bond payment. She stated the ordinance is permissive but not restrictive, so there are many things that are eligible, but the interlocal narrowed that field.

Councilmembers discussed whether General Funds should be used for the JPOP facilitation, that not funding it would be putting a risk into the whole justice project that is avoidable at a comparatively low expense, that the IPRTF did not use the money allocated for advertising in 2025 but will be ready for it in 2026, and that maybe the attorney and security in the Chambers are not needed.

Galloway summarized the intent for the IPRTF advertising and Halka clarified how they could accomplish it. They would just allow the \$10,000

in 2025 to lapse and would retain \$10,000 of the \$15,000 allocated for 2026 by submitting a SBR for \$5,000 credit for the allocation for 2026.

Scanlon briefed the councilmembers on the Council Office attorney SBR and the alternatives for them to consider (see Memo for 8.6.2025). He stated that looking at the overall budget for the Council this year, he is having a difficult time justifying additional funds to do this at this time. He thinks alternative two is the best option and they can have a conversation again if they demonstrate that there is more demand for legal services for the Legislative branch of government. He spoke about other actions the Council has going on that relate broadly to this.

Donovan spoke about another option of putting funds (\$50,000) in a legal reserve fund, that may or may not be used, for situations where Council may want some independent advice. He spoke about why it would be a benefit to the Council.

Elenbaas stated he agrees with almost everything Donovan said.

Halka answered a question about the \$15,000 request for Courthouse after-hours security and the difference between that and the budgeted \$14,000 for the Sheriff's deputy security. She stated she was informed by the Executive and Facilities staff that they will now be charging us for any Council meeting hours after business hours for the security company that does weapons checks, so she is adding some funding to anticipate those costs for next year.

Councilmembers and staff discussed whether the Executive's Office pays their pro-rated share of this since they are also present at the meetings, that this was because of a decision of the Superior Court system and that they should be paying the additional cost, and whether there is a benefit to the Council in having the Sheriff's Office security.

Byrd moved that they get rid of that appropriation, but Galloway asked if they could entertain that motion when they address the SBR credits, so no motion was put on the floor.

Councilmembers discussed the security.

Galloway moved to recommend the SBRs for the courthouse after-hours security, the accessibility compliance (ADA Title II), and the Contractor support for JPOP, but Byrd requested that they consider those one at a time.

Galloway moved that they recommend the \$15,000 Supplemental Budget Request for the Courthouse after-hours security.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, answered whether the Council is paying into Administrative Services to pay for things like this and why it cannot be covered that way. She stated they could follow up later with the rationale for why they are doing it this way.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 2 - Byrd and Donovan

Galloway moved that they recommend submitting the \$50,000 Supplemental Budget Request for Accessibility compliance (ADA Title II).

The motion was seconded Byrd.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Byrd, Galloway, Scanlon, Stremler, and Buchanan

Nay: 2 - Donovan and Elenbaas

Galloway moved that they recommend submitting a \$39,900 Supplemental Budget Request for Contractor support for JPOP.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Donovan, Galloway, Scanlon, Stremler, Buchanan, and Byrd

Nay: 1 - Elenbaas

Galloway moved to submit a negative \$106,054 Supplemental Budget Request for the Temporary Legislative Coordinator (BOE).

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, answered what this would look like. She stated, in the biennium budget we funded a two-year temporary position to assist our Board of Equalization team, but they have monitored activities closely this year and have chosen not to fill that position.

Galloway answered whether they could park this money for a future Council staff position, and stated this was one-time funding for the biennium so they would just be “zeroing” it out for fiscal year 2026. If Council decided to make an FTE adjustment for the next biennium, that would be a future Council decision. She reminded the Council that they had a target range of budget reductions for the mid-biennium so that is why they would be subtracting this item from the Council Office budget, so they can meet that reduction target.

Schott-Bresler answered whether the Council office has to cut their budget and stated the Executive’s Office asked all departments about what they would cut if they *had* to.

Donovan stated they were supposed to get the reduction proposals from all the departments in July and make their priorities about what they should be cutting or adding based on what they want other departments to be doing.

Galloway stated the Council is participating in the exercise as all other departments are and they have to submit the outcomes of the exercise by August 18th. So, they should get the results of the exercise at the beginning of September.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, Stremmer, Buchanan, and Byrd

Nay: 0

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Donovan

Galloway moved that they submit a negative \$15,000 Supplemental Budget Request for the Council Internship Program.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Galloway, Scanlon, Stremmer, Buchanan, Byrd, and Elenbaas

Nay: 0

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Donovan

Galloway moved that they revise the Supplemental Budget Request for the IPRTF Advertising to be a negative \$5,000 that they submit, as revised, for 2026.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Scanlon, Stremmler, Buchanan, Byrd, and Galloway

Nay: 1 - Elenbaas

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Donovan

Byrd moved that they have the Clerk of the Council draft a \$14,000 negative Supplemental Budget Request removing the Sheriff's deputy overtime hours (for Council security) and submit that SBR as prepared.

The motion was seconded by Elenbaas.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

The motion **failed** by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Byrd and Elenbaas

Nay: 4 - Stremmler, Buchanan, Galloway, and Scanlon

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Donovan

Scanlon spoke about making more significant budget decisions than these and that he hopes they are scheduling significant amounts of time for those.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.

MOTION SUMMARY:

MOTION 1

Motion approved that they recommend the \$15,000 Supplemental Budget Request for the Courthouse after-hours security.

MOTION 2

Motion approved that they recommend submitting the \$50,000 Supplemental Budget Request for Accessibility compliance (ADA Title II).

MOTION 3

Motion approved that they recommend submitting a \$ 39,900 Supplemental Budget Request for Contractor support for JPOP.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to submit a negative \$106,054 Supplemental Budget Request for the Temporary Legislative Coordinator (BOE).

MOTION 5

Motion approved that they submit a negative \$15,000 Supplemental Budget Request for the Council Internship Program.

MOTION 6

Motion approved that they revise the Supplemental Budget Request for the IPRTF Advertising to be a negative \$5,000 that they submit, as revised, for 2026.

2. [AB2025-563](#) Discussion of 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update Chapter 6: Transportation

Chris Comeau, TranspoGroup, read from a presentation (on file) and answered questions.

He answered whether some projects on the Six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) don't always happen within the six years, and stated the TIP is essentially a public declaration of what the County's priorities are. It should be things that are feasible and things that can be practically delivered, but it depends on what the agency's priorities are as well. He answered how emergency response and operations impact the TIP, the standards, and the decision-making (especially thinking about Lakeway which is the only way in or out of the Geneva and Sudden Valley areas). He stated the reality is, there is not a feasible way to serve that area with a second or backup route in and out of there. He answered questions about the level of service on Hannegan Road and spoke about what it would take to create a level of traffic stress type one or two.

Scanlon stated he is interested in whether this chapter allows the Parks Department to do what they want to with a multimodal trail planner, and would like to look at Safe Routes to Schools and what it would take in unincorporated areas to prioritize shorter, safe routes to schools or to transportation so someone could safely get to a bus stop.

Comeau stated he would not recommend having that as part of the standard but would use it as a prioritization tool or strategy going forward. He also spoke about Public Works Department staffing and stated it is one thing to get grant funding, but they have to have the staff to deliver the projects.

Scanlon stated he is wondering if it still makes sense to have some type of hook in the Comprehensive Plan update to be able to prioritize that type of work in the future. He asked about the freight and goods transport system map in the presentation and asked if it would make sense to look at some of the gaps, and whether there is anything they need to do to make sure roads are built to the standard that is needed.

Galloway stated they will probably have to schedule a follow-up discussion for Council to discuss other questions or amendments in the fall.

This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger