

**Whatcom County
Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee**

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



Committee Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, April 28, 2026
10 AM
Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers**

HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN LATE - ADJOURNS BY 11:25 A.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA
REVISION 4.24.2026

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Scanlon stated **AB2026-055** had a revised title.

Galloway moved to recommend approval of Consent Agenda items one through twelve.

The motion was seconded by Rienstra.

Councilmembers asked questions on some of the consent items.

Consent Agenda item #7 (AB2026-317)

Stremler asked what these improvements are actually going to look like as far as the connection between Kendall and Glacier.

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, stated it will be a shared-use path and the standard will be a paved path where possible (not all segments will have that possibility). They will be exploring a preferred alternative between Kendall and Glacier. He answered if they are using some of the existing trail corridor as well as new, and stated since this is a multi-modal path, it requires them to elevate the standard of construction. The existing path is somewhat up to standard in places but only a foot path in others. He answered if this is mostly a planning grant and if construction would then come after the planning, and stated it has elements of planning but also includes preliminary engineering for further construction to put them in a position for further grant opportunities.

Stremler stated he would like to consider Consent Agenda item number 12 (**AB2026-335**) separately.

Consent Agenda item#1 (AB2026-055)

Alexander Harris, Planning and Development Services Department, answered if this is in response to all the landowners who got their

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) disenrolled and if it is a way for the county to be able to not lose beneficial buffers that are in place. He stated it is very much in response to the CREP debacle in which the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) canceled landowner contracts mid-contract, and landowners stopped receiving payments as a result. He stated this is a program through the Department of Ecology to pay for permanent riparian easements, where landowners have already given up land, or they are willing to give up additional land along salmon bearing rivers and streams. This is a way to pay them out fully for the value of that land, and then put it into a conservation easement that is permanent (so there is no chance of it being canceled in five or ten years). He stated some of the money in the grant agreement is also going toward riparian planning. He answered how the grant agreement came about and if they will be challenged for taking farmland out of productive use.

Consent Agenda item#5 (AB2026-312)

Eric Chambers, Health and Community Services, gave an overview of this item as also laid out in the Staff Memo (on file). He answered how many housing units this project will entail and stated it will be the last eight houses of a 24-unit Phase 1, and then Phase 2 is similarly sized. He explained how the ownership model works, and stated Kulshan Community Land Trust keeps ownership of the land below the houses, but the owners will buy the actual house. He answered if the owners pay a fee to the Land Trust for the land and what happens if Kulshan does not retain ownership of it, and stated they have a mechanism (both in the covenant they place on the property and through their contract) that will allow them to pass that on to any other non-profit or organization that will maintain the covenant.

Scanlon stated the motion is now for item numbers 1-11 and councilmembers voted on those Consent items (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2026-055](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Ecology to support the Nooksack Riparian Resilience Project for restoration planning, partner coordination, and restoration implementation, in the amount of \$2,244,875

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

2. [AB2026-264](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County & Washington State University (WSU) to continue the jointly shared costs for faculty positions and program support for WSU Whatcom Extension in the amount of \$60,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$3,885,050.90

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

3. [AB2026-290](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Military Department to assist Whatcom County in preparing for all hazards, in the amount of \$65,507

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

4. [AB2026-301](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Pacific Security to continue security services for the Whatcom County Courthouse, in the amount of \$165,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$477,416.14

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

5. [AB2026-312](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Kulshan Community Land Trust for the development of eight energy-efficient, permanently affordable townhomes, in the amount of \$436,902.48

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

6. [AB2026-313](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to relinquish a foot trail easement held by the Whatcom Land Trust, located within South Fork Park

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

7. [AB2026-317](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Transportation to complete a multimodal path connecting the communities of Kendall and Glacier, in the amount of \$425,000

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

8. [AB2026-324](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group to correct the effective date of a recently approved rate increase to December 1, 2025, with no change to the contract amount (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract (FCZDBS) be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

9. [AB2026-329](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Peace Centers to maintain a coordinated system of licensed drop-in childcare within Whatcom County in the amount of \$290,676.84, for a total amended contract amount of \$790,597.84

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

10. [AB2026-331](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide funding for capital and operational expenses for the Cedar Commons Early Learning Center, in the amount of \$291,676

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

11. [AB2026-334](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Seattle Foundation to provide funding for projects that further the goals and objectives of the Trueblood Settlement Agreement, in the amount of \$3,603,879

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

12. [AB2026-335](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide funding for the second phase of the low-income Bellis Fair Housing development, in the amount of \$1,386,485

THIS ITEM WAS CONSIDERED SEPARATELY BELOW.

Council "Consent Agenda" Items Considered Separately

12. [AB2026-335](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide funding for the second phase of the low-income Bellis Fair Housing development, in the amount of \$1,386,485

***Galloway moved* and Rienstra seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.**

Stremler spoke about how this project was brought before the Economic Development Investment (EDI) Board (of which he is a member) last year but was not recommended by them because there was other funding available that could be used for it. But then it came to the Council and the Council decided to move forward with it. He wants to stay consistent on his

vote and felt the other funding mechanism was more appropriate versus using EDI money.

Scanlon recounted the discussion Council had on the project and stated there was conversation around the allocation for affordable housing for seniors, and he recalls making the argument at the time that there are seniors who work. They were talking about workforce housing and affordable housing, so to him it made a case for using these funds for this type of workforce, affordable housing.

Eric Chambers, Health and Community Services, answered questions on the project and how it fits into a larger (roughly \$33 million) project. The county's \$1.3 million does leverage substantial resources that come back into the county, and this is structured as a 50-year loan at two percent interest.

Galloway's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 1 - Stremmler

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-215](#) Quarterly Report from the Finance Division

Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director, read from a presentation (on file) on the fourth quarter financial report for 2025.

Galloway stated what she sees in the presentation is that the County is on track, in compliance, and doing an excellent job managing our revenues and expenditures. Sometimes there is community perception that the County is irresponsibly spending, but that is not the case, and this is clear evidence of that.

Rydel answered if there is a certain percent of increase that he is using for his sales tax projections. He stated it is a complex calculation but it projects about \$1.5 million more than the 2025 take of sales tax (which is not much since 2025 did not increase over 2024). He answered if this projection is used across all the different sales taxes (such as the criminal justice sales tax or affordable housing), and stated some of those are done on different basis so he only maintains this one for the General Fund sales tax. He answered whether having some of the federal decisions on the public funds from the December floods helps with some of the concerns around flood costs, and stated he would defer to Public Works to talk about

the Flood Fund balance right now, but some of the FEMA and State money potentially coming our way (it is not here yet) can be beneficial to that whole conversation.

Scanlon stated they will talk more about the Road Fund in a little bit when they talk about the ferry (see **AB2026-338** on this agenda).

This agenda item was REPORTED.

2. [AB2026-332](#) Presentation by the Executive's Office and Finance Director on approach to 2027-2028 biennial budget

Scanlon stated this item was removed from the agenda.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, confirmed that they plan to bring it back on May 12th.

This agenda item was WITHDRAWN.

3. [AB2026-327](#) Report from the Facilities Division of the Administrative Services Department

Rob Ney, Administrative Services Department Facilities, read from a presentation (on file) on what Facilities has been working on this year (including security upgrades to the courthouse, Sheriff's Office and 32nd Street tenant improvement designs, and Public Defender tenant improvement design), and specific projects that have been completed or are underway (including the fifth superior courtroom and the I.T. move to 400 North Commercial Street, other courthouse office improvements, and the courthouse exterior).

He answered what the timing is for occupancy of new Sherriff's office and the 32nd Street building (Planning), and stated they had to use outside architects and the process took longer than expected. He spoke about potentially having a phased approach to occupancy for the Sheriff, and what still needs to be done for the 32nd Street building. The latter could be done by the end of the year.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-338](#) Discussion of an ordinance to establish a Ferry District to fund and manage the Lummi Island Ferry System

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, read from a presentation (on file) about an overview of the ferry system, the County's legal obligation to maintain ferry service, ferry fund revenue sources, that the Road Fund cannot sustain payments to the ferry system or afford new

infrastructure debt service payments, benefits of county roads to all county residents, the health status of the Road and Ferry Funds, other options if they do not establish a ferry district, what the revenue from a county-wide ferry district tax could pay for, the two-step process being proposed today (form the ferry district and governing body first, then set the levy rate), a timeline for the two steps, consequences if no action is taken, and next action steps (approval of district formation, work sessions, setting a levy rate, updating governing code, and preparing to borrow for the bond).

Kosa and Roland Middleton, Public Works Department, discussed with councilmembers that the ordinance is proposing that the councilmembers and county executive would be the board of supervisors of the district (similar to the Flood Control Zone District), that the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) states that the legislative body is essentially the board of supervisors and that the executive was also added to the proposed code for administrative action, that the executive does not have a vote or veto authority and the duties of the council and executive would be apportioned according to the Whatcom County Charter, that there are specific State laws for the advisory committee which reports to the board of supervisors, that the RCW allows for the tax to be county-wide and this would be an additional amount layered on top of the Road Fund tax for the unincorporated county, that having a ferry district will put back levels of service that are desperately needed and protect those in the future, that the hope is that ferry expenses coming out of the Road Fund would be paid out of this district (though it depends on what the Council wants the tax to cover), how the \$35 million of grants the County has received would be at risk if the district is not formed, that they would schedule work sessions to discuss options for levy rates and how the board of supervisors would like to use the funds, and what the most up to date balance of the Ferry Fund was at the end of 2025.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, answered whether this item requires a public hearing (because it should have one), and stated it does.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

Scanlon stated they have four items for discussion and recommendation to Council and councilmembers concurred that, because of time constraints, they would not make recommendations out of this committee and would just consider those items this evening. He read each of them into the record.

1. [AB2026-209](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 7, in the amount of \$23,290,457

See notes on this item under the Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council header.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.
2. [AB2026-212](#) Resolution ordering the cancellation of unredeemed checks (warrants) more than one year old

See notes on this item under the Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council header.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.
3. [AB2026-292](#) Resolution amending the 2026 Flood Control Zone District and Subzones Budget, request no. 1, in the amount of \$23,406 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

See notes on this item under the Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council header.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.
4. [AB2026-295](#) Resolution authorizing the submission of three independent grant applications to the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board to restore fish passage at the Black Slough and Homesteader culverts and to complete the final design and permitting of the Tinling Creek culvert project (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

See notes on this item under the Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council header.

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 11:43 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Jon Scanlon-via email 5/11/2026

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE