WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICE
COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

DATE: May 8, 2026

RE: Direction on the 2027-28 Council Office Budget (AB2026-346)

BACKGROUND

The 2027-28 Biennial Budget development is underway, and the Executive Office is requesting departments submit a draft list of potential Additional Services Requests (ASRs) by May 29, 2026 (Phase 1). A refined list of ASRs will be due to the Executive Office in early July (Phase 2).

Updated Biennial Budget Calendar	Date / Timeframe
Departments Submit Realignment Exercise (Phase 1)	Friday, May 29
Departments Submit Budget Package (Phase 2)	Early July
Executive's Budget Delivered to Council	Tuesday, September 1
County Budget Discussions ** Dept. Head Presentations to Council*	9/15*, 9/29*, 10/6*, 10/13, 10/27
Introduction of Budget Ordinance	November 10 (or earlier)
Adoption (and Public Hearing) of Budget Ordinance	November 24 (before Dec 1 per RCW)

Council direction is requested on ASRs for the 2027-2028 Council Office budget.

1. What reduction amount, if any, do you propose for the Council Office budget?
   - Council Office base budgets for the biennium are as follows:
     - 2027 $2,790,890
     - 2028 $2,914,397
   - As a hypothetical exercise in preparation of potential budget reductions, the Executive Office requests all departments submit a draft list of ASRs with budget reduction scenarios of 7-10% along with service impacts. The range of reductions in the Council Office budget would be as follows:
     - 2027 $195,362 - $279,089
     - 2028 $204,008 - $291,440

2. For this hypothetical exercise, please provide direction on the types of reduction measures to submit, for example eliminate discretionary spending (misc. expenses and council discretion, see below), reduce salaries/benefits (total cost is $2.1M in 2027, $2.22M in 2028), prioritize retention of state mandated activities, other ideas?

3. Please provide direction on the following list of draft ASRs, which are categorized by:
   - **Needs**: items needed to address continuing operations of the council office
   - **Miscellaneous reductions**: potential cost savings in operations expenses
   - **Council discretion**: additional items for council consideration

Council Office Draft ASRs 2027-2028

Acct	Description	2027 ASR	2028 ASR	Continuing or One Time	Notes
NEEDS: Items needed to address continuing operations of the Council Office					
6120	Extra help - BOE & IPRTF & Interns	$ 35,000	$ 35,000	Continuing	Adding $35,000 to cover BOE per diem for hearing days. 25-26 funding was one time not continuing ($40,500 base budget is $10,500 BOE per diem and $30,000 interns)
6520	Software	$ 900	$ 900	Continuing	3 Adobe pro licenses for ADA compliance
6610	Contractual svcs-(captioning)	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	Continuing	Meeting captioning cost for ADA compliance
6630	Professional services (Hearing Examiner)	$ -	$ 2,500	Continuing	2026 contract $118,779.60. Estimated 3% COLA each year totals $122,364 (2027), $126,035 (2028)
6699	Other Services - Interfund (Security)	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	Continuing	Contracted courthouse security for after hours meetings - approx $2500/quarter. Could consider eliminating Sheriff Deputy ($14,000).
6870	Space Rental (Community Conversations)	$ 800	$ 800	Continuing	Adds funding for 2-3 paid locations for Community Conversations Events
		$ 56,700	$ 59,200		
MISCELLANEOUS REDUCTIONS: Potential cost savings in operations expenses					
6320	Office & operating supplies	$ (1,000)	$ (1,000)	Continuing	Base budget is $8,904.00. The 2025 remaining balance was $3,350.34
6330	Printing	$ (3,000)	$ (3,000)	Continuing	Base budget is $5,678.00. The 2025 remaining balance was $1,766.25
6340	Books, publications, subscriptions	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	Dropbox, CDN, and books
6510	Tools & equipment	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	No anticipated costs in next 2 years, leaves $6,600
6625	Software maintenance contracts	$ 200	$ 200	Continuing	funding for annual subscriptions including Canva
6655	Interpreter services	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	leaves $2000
6720.S.210150	Telephone - Mobile (Council Cellphones)	$ (3,500)	$ (3,500)	One Time	5 CM cell phones, reduce only 2027-28 budget for only those currently with a county-issued cell phone
6780	Travel-Educ/Training (BOE)	$ (1,500)	$ (1,500)	One Time	leaves $0 for travel, remote participate still possible
6780.S.210689	Travel, education, training (Clerks)	$ (1,000)	$ (1,000)	One Time	leaves $0
7070	Minor remodeling	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	leaves $0
7115	Membership & Assoc Dues	$ (3,000)	$ (3,000)	One Time	leaves $0, no staff membership reimbursement
7140	Meeting refreshments	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	leaves $0
		$ (19,800)	$ (19,800)		
COUNCIL DISCRETION					
6790	Travel - Other	$ (1,000)	$ (1,000)	One Time	Reduces Travel-Other to $14,000. Eliminates additiona travel funds allocated to each councilmember. Total travel spent 2025 $13,500. does not include registration - see 7110 ($3,000).
6790.S.210151	Travel - Mark Stremler	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S.210152	Travel - Jon Scanlon	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S,210153	Travel - Ben Elenbaas	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S.210154	Travel - Kaylee Galloway	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S.210155	Travel - Elizabeth Boyle	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S.210156	Travel - Barry Buchanan	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
6790.S.210157	Travel - Jessica Rienstra	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	One Time	
10002101.6630	Contractor for JPOP [IPRTF ACCOUNT]	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	One Time	
6120	Extra help - BOE & IPRTF & Interns	$ (30,000)	$ (30,000)	One Time	Eliminate all funding for council internship program ($40,500 base budget is $10,500 BOE per diem and $30,000 interns)
		$ (16,000)	$ (16,000)		
		TOTAL CHANGE			
		$ 20,900	$ 23,400		