



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Council Staff

DATE: ~~July 10, 2025~~ Revised July 21, 2025

RE: Voter's Pamphlet Charter Amendment Pro/Con Statement Committee Appointments

For each ballot measure on the November ballot, [RCW 29A.32.280](#) requires the legislative authority to appoint up to three individuals to serve on pro and con committees to write statements for the local voter's pamphlet. Each committee will write the statement and rebuttal advocating for the measure (the pro committee) or against the measure (the con committee).

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed twelve Charter amendments for the 2025 November general election. Attached is a list of citizens who have volunteered to serve on the pro and con committees for each Charter Review Commission amendment. The Council Office publicized the opportunity to serve on pro and con committees via press release, social media, county website, email notifications, and bulletin board posts, as well as discussion during meetings of the Charter Review Commission.

The Council is asked to appoint up to three individuals for each committee. Each applicant's materials are attached. Note that RCW 29A.32.280 requires individuals appointed to pro committees to be residents of the local jurisdiction, while individuals appointed to con committees to be residents "whenever possible."

Charter Review Commission Proposed Amendments – Pro-Con Committee Applicants

Proposition No. 1: AUTHORIZING COUNCILMEMBERS TO HIRE DEDICATED AIDES

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to authorize councilmembers to hire aides. This measure would amend Section 2.22 of the Whatcom County Charter to allow each councilmember to hire a dedicated legislative aide. It also allows multiple councilmembers to hire one joint aide if they choose.

PRO: Andrew Reding, JG Sandy Phillips, Lindsey Elenbaas, Ashley Butenschoen, Hannah Ordos

CON: Jon Mutchler

Proposition No. 2: ESTABLISHING A WHATCOM COUNTY OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to create the office of the Whatcom County Ombuds. This measure would amend Article 2 of the Whatcom County Charter to require the County Council to establish an Office of the Ombuds. The Ombuds would receive and investigate complaints and inquiries about county government. The Council would be required to provide the office necessary funding and power to fulfill its duties. The office would start work no later than January 1st, 2027. In 2030, the Whatcom County Council would have the ability to eliminate this office.

PRO: Brian Estes, Colton Kaltenfeldt, ~~Greg Thames~~, JG Sandy Phillips, Lane Davis Coury

CON: Lindsey Elenbaas, Ashley Butenschoen, Hannah Ordos

Proposition No. 3: ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE AUDITS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to establish a process for performance audits. This measure would amend Article 2 of the Whatcom County Charter to require the County Council establish a County Performance Auditing Process to review, evaluate, and report on various aspects of County Government. This process would be conducted by an independent contractor. The process would commence no later than January 1, 2027 and be performed afterwards as needed. The County Executive would be required to make a report to Council about the implementation of recommendations from the performance audit.

PRO: Brian Estes, Colton Kaltenfeldt, ~~Greg Thames~~, JG Sandy Phillips, Lane Davis Coury, Joel Pitts-Jordan, Jessica Rienstra

CON:

Proposition No. 4: CLARIFYING THE POWER AND DUTIES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to clarify the powers and duties of county elected officials. This measure would amend Article 3 of the Whatcom County Charter to clarify the independence of the County Elected Offices from the office of the County Executive and to make more consistent the terminology used to describe those offices. This amendment clarifies the powers and duties of each elected office without changing those powers or duties.

PRO: ~~Greg Thames~~, Lane Davis Coury

CON:

Proposition No. 5: MODIFYING THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to modify the process of adjusting the boundaries of each district in the county as is required once every ten years. This measure would amend Article 4 of the Whatcom County Charter to clarify the powers and appointment process for the Chair of the Districting Committee, require the Committee to comply with State law on Redistricting, and adjust timelines to align with the availability of census data. The measure would also require that the Districting Committee hold a public hearing before adopting a redistricting plan.

PRO: Lane Davis Coury, Joel Pitts-Jordan, Eamonn Collins

CON:

Proposition No. 6: ADJUSTING THE CALCULATION OF SIGNATURES REQUIRED FOR A REFERENDUM

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to adjust the number of signatures required for the public to place a Referendum on the ballot. This measure would amend Charter Section 5.60 to require a proponent of a referendum to collect the signatures of registered voters in the County in an amount equal to fourteen percent of the most recent County Executive election. The current requirement is eight percent of the last gubernatorial election. Currently, based on the 2024 gubernatorial election and the 2023 County Executive election, this would increase the required number of signatures from 10,917 to 11,187.

PRO: Greg Thames

CON: Andrew Reding

Proposition No. 7: PROHIBITING COUNTY GOVERNMENT FROM INTERFERING WITH INITIATIVES AND CHARTER AMENDMENTS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to prohibit the County Government from taking official action in relation to an Initiative or a Charter Amendment. This measure would amend Articles 5 and 8 of the Whatcom County Charter to prohibit the County Council from acting to impede, alter, or prevent an initiative or Charter Amendment from being placed on the ballot and prohibit any County Official from expending county resources in support of or opposition to an Initiative or Charter Amendment. It would also prohibit the Council from delaying implementation of an initiative or Charter Amendment approved by voters.

PRO: ~~Greg Thames~~, JG Sandy Phillips, Lindsey Elenbaas, Ashley Butenschoen

CON: Chao ying Wu (late), Ray Deck III (late), Cleveland Harris II (late), AnneMarie Faiola (late), Emily O'Connor (late)

Proposition No. 8: MODIFYING THE BUDGET PROCESS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to modify the budget amendment process. This measure would amend Article 6 of the Whatcom County Charter to require the County Executive to publish budget preparation instructions via website 180 days before the end of the budget cycle, would require County Departments and the County Executive to submit budget related information earlier in the budget cycle, would require the Executive to provide budget information to the Council, and would require the Executive to post other budget related information to a public website.

PRO: JG Sandy Phillips, Joel Pitts-Jordan, Lindsey Elenbaas, Eamonn Collins

CON:

Proposition No. 9: ADDING ACCOUNTABILITY TO FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to modify the financial reporting requirements of the County Executive. This measure would amend Section 6.41 of the Whatcom County Charter to prohibit supplemental appropriations if the Executive has not complied with mandatory financial reporting requirements. Currently, the County Executive is required to submit a quarterly report to Council showing the relation between estimated income and expenses and actual income and expenses. This amendment would prohibit the Council from approving supplemental appropriations, with certain exceptions, if that report is not made.

PRO: Brian Estes, Joel Pitts-Jordan, Lindsey Elenbaas, Hannah Ordos

CON:

Proposition No. 10: DETERMINING INITIAL RULES FOR THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to set the rules of procedure for the first Charter Review Commission Meeting. This measure would amend Charter Section 8.11 to require the commissioner who received the greatest number of votes in the Charter Review Commission election to set the procedural rules that will govern the first meeting of the commission until a permanent set of rules is adopted by the commission.

PRO: Jon Mutchler, Greg Thames, Lane Davis Coury

CON:

Proposition No. 11: ADJUSTING THE CALCULATION OF SIGNATURES REQUIRED FOR A CHARTER AMENDMENT

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to adjust the number of signatures required for the public to place a Charter Amendment on the ballot. This measure would amend Charter Section 8.22 to require a proponent of a charter amendment to register with the Auditor an Initiative bearing the signatures of registered voters equal to twenty percent of the most recent County Executive election. The current requirement is fifteen percent of the last gubernatorial election. Currently, based on the 2024 gubernatorial election and the 2023 County Executive election, this would reduce the required number of signatures from 20,468 to 15,981.

PRO: ~~Greg Thames~~, JG Sandy Phillips

CON: Ashley Butenschoen, Hannah Ordos

Proposition No. 12: REQUIRING LAND SUPPLY AND CONSTRUCTION COST ANALYSIS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to require the Executive to publish an analysis of how land supply and construction costs could be affected by new legislation. This measure would amend Article 9 of the Charter to require the Executive to publish a credible analysis of how land supply and construction costs could be affected before the County amends any land use or construction section of the County Code.

PRO: Brian Estes, Jon Mutchler, Lindsey Elenbaas, R. Perry Eskridge, Hannah Ordos

CON: ~~Greg Thames~~