

## 2026 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

**Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee**  
**Council Meeting – Tuesdays**

**Finance and Administrative Services Committee**  
**Council Meeting - Tuesdays**

**Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee**  
**Council Meeting - Tuesdays**

**Planning and Development Committee**  
**Council Meeting - Tuesdays**

**Public Works and Health Committee**  
**Council Meeting - Tuesdays**

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### **Behavioral Health Advisory Committee**

#### **2026 Meetings Dates:**

**Time: 3:00 – 4:30 pm**

**Dates: Mondays – Jan. 12, Mar. 9, May 11, July 13, Sept. 14, Nov. 9**

**Location: Hybrid Format – Zoom / In person at 322 N. Commercial St, Garden Level Conference Room**

**Purpose:** To fund a county wide infrastructure for behavioral health programs and services, emphasizing expansion or new development, which will benefit citizens who are impacted by mental health challenges and/or substance use disorder. The goal is to promote their resilience and their recovery from mental health challenges and/or substance use disorder, and to reduce their need to utilize costly and less effective interventions of emergency services and the criminal legal system.

### **Bellingham International Airport Advisory Committee (BIAAC)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates: TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location: Hybrid format – Zoom / In-person at (ARFF) 2005 W. Bakerview Rd.**

**Purpose:** The BIAAC serves as the advisory committee to the Commission of the Port of Bellingham to provide input from aviation professionals and the community about the airport. The members of the committee serve to provide both technical input and a community perspective to the Commission about airport operations, development, community partnerships, services and impacts.

### **Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

**Dates:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of Jan., March, May, July, Sept., Nov.

**Location:** Hybrid Format – Zoom / In-person (locations will change)

**Purpose:** This is a non-voting ex-officio position on the Board of Directors for the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce. The mission of the Chamber is to provide a unified business voice to promote a healthy community economy

### **Business and Commerce Advisory Committee (non-voting member)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 11:00 – 12:30 pm

**Dates:** generally 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month.

**Location:** Hybrid Format – Zoom / In-person at Port of Bellingham Mt. Baker Conf. room 1801 Roeder Ave.

**Purpose:** The committee will advise the Whatcom County Council on issues, including regulations and policies that could impact local businesses, industry, or economic development. The committee will report directly to the County Council as necessary to carry out the following functions: Review and provide recommendations on comprehensive plans, regulations, economic development efforts and on proposals which directly impact business and economic conditions in Whatcom County. Assist the county and provide recommendations on efforts to improve business conditions, environment and infrastructure. Assist and develop recommendations for comprehensive economic development efforts of Associate Development Organizations (ADO) and other issues impacting business in Whatcom County. Develop recommendations and strategies for ensuring the county applies a client-focused approach to support businesses with regulations, permitting, and planning.

### **Child and Family Well-being Task Force**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates - TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location:**

**Purpose:** Continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and families and make specific recommendations for improvements for all departments.

### **Climate Impact Advisory Committee**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates :**

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:30 pm

**Dates:** 3rd Thursday of each month

#### **Location:**

**Purpose:** The Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee provides review and recommendations to the Whatcom County Council and Executive on issues related to the preparation and adaptation for, and the prevention and mitigation of, impacts of climate change.

*\*\*1 non-voting CM – 3 year term (Kaylee Galloway appointed 2023 through 12/31/2025)*

### **County Finance Committee (The Council Chair is automatically a member of this committee)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates**

***Will be established in first quarter of 2026***

**Purpose:** RCW [36.48.070](#) County finance committee—Approval of investment policy and debt policy—Rules. The county treasurer, the county auditor, and the chair of the county legislative authority, ex officio, shall constitute the county finance committee. The county treasurer shall act as chair of the committee and the county auditor as secretary thereof. The committee shall keep a full and complete record of all its proceedings in appropriate books of record and all such records and all correspondence relating to the committee shall be kept in the office of the county auditor and shall be open to public inspection. The committee shall approve county investment policy and a debt policy and shall make appropriate rules and regulations for the carrying out of the provisions of RCW [36.48.010](#) through [36.48.060](#), not inconsistent with law.

### **Developmental Disabilities Board (DDAB)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 4:30 – 6:30 pm

**Dates:** 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of odd numbered months

**Location:** Hybrid format - Zoom/In-person at 110 Unity Street, small conference room

**Purpose:** The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board advises Whatcom County Health and Community Services on the work of the Developmental Disabilities program.

Areas in which the board advises include:

- Planning and coordination of local services to people with developmental disabilities.
- County Contracted employment and day program services.
- Information and referral for individuals with developmental disabilities in Whatcom County.

## **Drayton Harbor and Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committees (meet together)**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 3:00 – 5:00 pm

**Dates:** Jan. 28, April 29, July 29, Oct. 28

**Location:** Hybrid format Zoom / In-person 322 N. Commercial, Garden Room

**Purpose:** The purpose of the shellfish protection districts is to provide services to citizens experiencing nonpoint pollution of surface water drainages and coastal waters and to implement Shellfish Recovery Plans to allow removal of downgrades and maintain year-round shellfish harvest. The duties of the Advisory Committees are to advise the County Council on the proposed actions and operations relating to the restoration of water quality in these watersheds.

## **EDI Board**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:**

**Dates:** Not set yet. Typically 2/year

**Location:**

**Purpose:** The Economic Development Investment (EDI) Board makes recommendations to the Whatcom County Council for investments in public facilities that promote economic development throughout the county. In accordance with RCW 82.14.370, these investments support industrial, commercial, and residential growth, including the creation of housing units that strengthen Whatcom County's economy.

1. Increase the number of family wage jobs available in Whatcom County
2. Retain, expand, and attract businesses to Whatcom County
3. Invest in housing infrastructure and affordable workforce housing serving residents at 120% Area Median Income (AMI) or below
4. Invest in expansion of broadband internet infrastructure expanding access to affordable and reliable internet for Whatcom County businesses
5. Sustain the EDI program through repayment of EDI loans

## **EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Oversight Board**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 2:00 – 3:30 pm

**Dates:** Mar. 11, June 10, Sept. 9, Dec. 9

**Location:** Hybrid zoom format / In-person at 1500 N. State Street, conf. room 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

**Purpose:** The purpose of the EMS Oversight Board is to support a coordinated, countywide EMS system by monitoring overall system performance, including service levels, system readiness, and clinical outcomes, considering recommendations from the Technical Advisory Board and Finance Subcommittee, and issuing informed policy and budget recommendations related to levy and county-supported EMS activities. While portions of the EMS system are funded and managed by cities and local districts through their own levies, the Board focuses its oversight on the county-funded components to ensure that administration, system design, service levels, and financial stewardship reflect countywide needs, community priorities, and best practices. The Board meets at least quarterly to review system-wide performance, ensure transparency and public engagement, and incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in all actions.

### **Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 7:00 pm

**Dates:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month *as needed*

**Location:** In-person at 322 N. Commercial St., Garden Level Conference Room

**Purpose:** Committee assists and makes recommendations to the Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors in performing flood damage repairs, maintenance and improvements, and minimizing future flood damage through prevention and management on the Nooksack River, its watershed and the other watersheds within Whatcom County. Serves as an Ex-Officio member (non-voting).

### **Forest Advisory Committee**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 4:00 – 6:00 pm

**Dates:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month (schedule to be further discussed at first meeting Jan. 6)

**Location:** Hybrid format-zoom / In-person at Northwest Annex Conference Room

**Purpose:** The Forest Advisory Committee provides review and recommendations to the Whatcom County Council on issues that affect the forestry industry. The Forest Advisory Committee also provides a forum for all sectors of the forestry community to contribute to discussions on the future of forestry in Whatcom County.

### **Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates: TBD**

**Time:** 9:00 – 11:00 am

**Dates:** Meets monthly, various Mondays

**Location:** Hybrid Format / In Person at County Council office, 311 Grand Ave #105

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force is to continually review Whatcom County's criminal justice and behavioral health programs and make specific recommendations to safely and effectively reduce incarceration of individuals struggling with mental illness and chemical dependency, and minimize jail utilization by pretrial defendants who can safely be released.

### **Intergovernmental Tribal Relations Committee**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates – TBD**

**Dates:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Purpose:** This committee consists of two County Councilmembers along with an unspecified number of tribal delegates serving on an as-needed basis as a liaison committee between the Whatcom County Council and either or both of the two Native American governments in Whatcom County. Meetings are not regularly scheduled, but can be requested by either or both tribal governments, or by the County Council. Committee members shall merely act in a representative capacity, and all final decisions on behalf of Whatcom County shall be made by vote of the entire County Council as provided in the Whatcom County Charter.

### **Justice Project Finance and Facility Advisory Board**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates**

**Time: 3:30 – 5:00 pm**

**Dates: 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month**

**Location: Garden level room, 322 Commercial Ave.**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Finance and Facility Advisory Board (FFAB) is to provide financial oversight of the funds collected from the public safety sales and use tax and make recommendations on the finance and operations of the jail, behavioral health, and supportive housing facilities and services, aligned with a population health report on public health and safety. FFAB was initially conceived in [Ordinance No. 2023-039](#) adopted in July 2023 and later adopted into County Code through [Ordinance No. 2024-042](#).

### **Justice Project Oversight and Planning Committee (JPOP)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time: 2:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Dates: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every Month**

**Location: Hybrid Format / In Person at County Council office 311 Grand Ave #105**

**Purpose:** The Justice Project Oversight and Planning (JPOP) Committee is a standing committee of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force/ Law and Justice Council to help the IPRTF/LJC monitor progress towards the goals of the [Justice Project Implementation Plan](#).

**LEOFF Board****2026 Meeting Dates: - TBD**

**Time:** 9:00 – 9:30 am

**Dates:** Second Wednesday of each month

**Location:** Hybrid format – zoom / In-person at HR office, suite 107

**Purpose:** Per RCW 41.26 Whatcom County administers the Whatcom County Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Plan (LEOFF) 1 Disability Board. This board has jurisdiction over the police and fire agencies in Whatcom County, excluding the City of Bellingham Police and Fire Departments. The Leoff Board reviews and approves all eligible disability and medical claims submitted by Leoff 1 members. The Rules and Procedures that govern their actions follow State Retirement System laws.

**Whatcom Unified Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)****2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 1:30 – 3:30 pm

**Dates:** 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of January, April, September, November

**Location:** WUECC, 3888 Sound Way, unless otherwise scheduled

**Purpose:** The LEPC was created in 1987 to fulfill local hazardous materials responsibilities designated by congress in the Superfund Amendment Reauthorization Act (SARA) Title III. The State of Washington implemented the congressional mandate with the adoption of WAC 118.

Also known as the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), the legislation requires LEPCs to develop a local hazardous materials response plan and to maintain public files that show chemical inventories of facilities regulated by the Act. The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management and the City of Bellingham Office of Emergency Management facilitate the activities of the LEPC. The Chair of the Committee is elected annually.

It was the legislative intent of the Act that LEPCs be composed of a broad cross-section of the community including: state and local elected officials, response organizations, health officials, community groups, environmental organizations, and regulated businesses and industries.

**Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee****2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 6:00 – 8:00 pm

**Dates:** 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month

**Location:** generally held at The Gathering Place, 3913 Legoe Bay Road

**Purpose:** The Committee provides review and recommendations to the Whatcom County Council and Executive on issues that affect the ongoing operations and infrastructure of ferry service to Lummi Island. Review includes: proposed changes to ferry operations and fares; an annual review of the ferry fund; demands of and improvements to ferry services; and ferry replacement options. The Committee also provides a forum for those who depend upon Lummi Island ferry service to voice their ideas and concerns about the ferry service.

### **Marine Resource Committee**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 5:00 – 7:00 pm

**Dates:** First Thursday of each month

**Location:** Hybrid format - zoom / In-person meetings are held quarterly in the Garden Room – 322 Commercial Street, every other month will be virtual

**Purpose:** The Whatcom County marine resource committee will address local marine issues and recommend remedial action to local authorities. The committee will build local awareness of issues, and gather support for remedies consistent with the benchmarks for performance as established in the August 20, 1998 report to the conveners by the “Murray-Metcalf Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative”

### **Whatcom Opioid Response Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC Group)**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**First Thursday of each month**

**1:00 – 2:00 pm**

**Location: Meetings held via Zoom**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Whatcom Opioid Response MAC Group is to coordinate ongoing response efforts to the opioid crisis in our community in order to reduce opioid-related deaths and mitigate the impacts to public safety in Whatcom County. MAC Group goals are to improve situational awareness and promote cross-sector collaboration; identify systemic gaps and develop recommendations to remove barriers, then bring these recommendations to policymakers and funding decision makers; identify and prioritize additional shorter-term objectives and strategies, and move quickly to implementation.

### **North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization Board of Directors**

#### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 1:30 – 3:00 pm

**Dates:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month

**Location:** Hybrid format – MS Teams / In-person at 2021 E. College Way, Suite 101 Mt. Vernon

**Purpose:** North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization oversees Crisis Services (mental health and substance use disorder) for the non-Medicaid system.

**Mission Statement of NSBHO**

Empowering individuals and families to improve their health and well-being.

**Vision of the North Sound BHO**

A system of care that is shaped by the voices of our communities, and people using behavioral health services. The people who work in this system are competent, compassionate, and empowering and supportive of personal health and wellness.

## **Northwest Clean Air Agency**

### **2026 Meeting Dates**

**Time:** 1:30 – 3:30 pm

**Dates:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month (with exception of January and July)

**Location:** Hybrid format / In-person at 1600 S. Second Street, Mt. Vernon

**Purpose:** The Northwest Clean Air Agency's nine-member Board of Directors establishes policies and oversees agency operations. The Board is comprised of a representative from each of the four counties -- Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties -- and a Member-at-Large selected by the other eight members.

## **Northwest Regional Council**

### **2026 Meeting Dates**

**Time:** 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Dates:** April 16, Aug. 20, Dec. 17

**Location:** Hybrid format / In-person at the Mount Vernon office 301 Valley Mall Way

**Purpose:** The Northwest Regional Council (NWRC) has been serving the people of Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom Counties since 1971. They are governed by a board of directors that is composed of two elected officials from each member county. Efforts are concentrated in funding and/or providing community-based programs to help elders, people with disabilities, and people living with behavioral health disorders live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, postponing or eliminating the need for institutional care.

## **Opportunity Council (OC)**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 4:00 pm

**Dates:** Last Thursday each month

### **Location:**

**Purpose:** Opportunity Council (OC) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency whose mission is to help people improve their lives through education, support, and direct assistance while advocating for just and equitable communities. For over 50 years the OC has played a key role in development, ongoing operations and partnerships with local, state and national groups to provide innovative, collaborative solutions to meet the needs of people in our community.

*Like all Community Action Agencies, Opportunity Council is led by a tripartite volunteer board of community leaders that is required to include one-third public officials plus one third people with low incomes, and one-third members of the private sector.*

\*All OC board members are approved and elected per the agency bylaws. Interested Council members must submit an OC board member application, subject to OC nominating and approval process; it is expected that OC Board members commit to a full, three-year term.

\*\* (Kaylee Galloway to serve until 1/2028)

**Public Defense Advisory Committee**

**2026 Meeting Dates - TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location:**

*Purpose:* The Committee shall submit its observation of the public defender system to the Executive and the County Council not less than annually.

**Public Health Advisory Board**

**2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 7:00 am

**Dates:** Second Thursday of the month.

**Location:** Administrative Conf. Rm. At 509 Girard St.

*Purpose:* The Board shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Health Board and the Health and Community Services Department Director on all issues related to health. The Board has 21 members who are residents of the county. Members are appointed by the County Council and the membership includes one ex officio member from the Board of Health and one ex officio Public Health Officer.

**Racial Equity Commission**

**2026 Meeting Dates - TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location:**

*Purpose:* As a conduit for ongoing community collaboration, engagement, and education, within the broader context of diversity and inclusion, the purpose of the Whatcom racial equity commission is to gather, review, and evaluate data and to make recommendations on eliminating racial inequities, in all its forms, throughout Whatcom County. 1 non-voting CM – 2 year term

\*\*(Kaylee Galloway was appointed 2023. Two year term through 12/31/2025)

## **Solid Waste Advisory Committee**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:00 pm

**Dates:** January 22, April 23, July 23, October 22

**Location:** Hybrid Format / In-person at the Civic Building Garden Room

**Purpose:** As per RCW 70.95 and WCC 2.78, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee is established to be comprised of a county-wide group of representatives of citizens, public interest groups, business, the waste management industry, and local elected public officials to provide for coordination and information exchange between the groups about solid waste issues and to provide ongoing public input and advice to Whatcom County on solid waste management issues to prevent land, air, and water pollution and conserve the natural, economic, and energy resources.

## **Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)**

*Note: The councilmember chosen to be the Executive Pro-Tempore may not serve as the representative on this board since that person may have to fill in for the Executive in his role with WCOG.*

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time:** 3:00 pm

**Dates:** Jan. 21, March 11, May 13, July 8, Oct. 14, Dec. 9

**Location:** Hybrid format – Zoom / In-Person at WCOG Office – 314 E. Champion Street

**Purpose:** The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is a planning conference authorized under state law (RCW 36.64.080) “for the purpose of studying regional and governmental problems of mutual interest and concern...” WCOG is composed of elected officials appointed by the governing bodies of Whatcom County, Lummi Nation, Port of Bellingham and the seven cities. WCOG is supported by a professional staff.

Most of WCOG’s activity is focused on its federal designation as the region’s metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and state designation as the regional transportation planning organization (RTPO). Most of the work performed by WCOG as the MPO and RTPO involves setting regional transportation policy, approving investments in transportation facilities (roads, transit, bike/ped, etc.) and carrying out federal and state transportation planning requirements.

## **WSAC Board Member as Alternate**

### **2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Dates:** TBD

**Location:**

**Purpose:** The Washington State Association of Counties’ Board of Directors is charged with the “general supervision over the affairs of the Association...” WSAC bylaws provide for the following representation on the WSAC Board of Directors: *“(e) One representative and an alternate, who is an Active Member, from each county of 180,000 population or greater.”* The Association bylaws will be provided to the appointed alternate.

**WSAC Coastal Counties Caucus****2026 Meeting Dates/Time/Location:**

**No Standing meeting dates. Meets as needed**

*Purpose:* Create a forum of county staff within the 14 Coastal Counties to interact, discuss, engage and recommend WSAC positions on issues relating to the waters of Puget Sound, Hood Canal and the Pacific Ocean.

\*\*Optional

**WSAC Timber Counties Caucus****2026 Meeting Dates: TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location:**

*Purpose:* Interact, discuss, engage and recommend WSAC positions on issues relating to: Federal land management, BLM and US Forest Service, Dept. of Natural Resources management of state forest lands, Forest Practices Board regulation and their impacts on counties, wildland fire control and management. Maintain open communications and interaction with DNR, Forest Practices Board, The Board of Natural Resources, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management as well as the stakeholders associated with these entities.

\*\*Optional

**WSAC Legislative Steering Committee**

(Washington State Association of Counties)

**2026 Meeting Dates – TBD**

**Time:**

**Dates:**

**Location:**

*Purpose:* The Legislative Steering Committee is responsible to prepare and recommend a proposed legislative program for consideration of the membership at the Annual Meeting.

The Legislative Steering Committee shall monitor events of each legislative session and shall be empowered to adopt policy relating to legislation, executive branch policies and operation, and the activities of other organizations and associations.

**WHAT-COMM/Prospect Communications (911) Administrative Board**

**(The Chair of the Finance Committee is the representative for this board)**

**2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time: 1:00 – 3:00 pm**

**Dates: Thursdays – Jan. 29, May 28, Sept. 24**

**Location: Municipal Court Building “Fireplace Room” 625 Halleck St.**

**Purpose:** The Board is authorized to establish broad policy guidelines for the operation of the What-Comm and Prospect Communication Centers; authorize the financial contributions of the participating user groups; approve new agencies who wish to join; serve as final resolution for policy disputes; and locate and lease facilities for the Centers.

Members include 9 voting members; the Whatcom County Executive; the Whatcom County Sheriff; the City of Bellingham Mayor; the Chairperson of the County Council Finance Committee; the Chairperson of the Bellingham City Council Public Safety Committee; the City of Bellingham Police Chief, one elected mayor or council person to represent the general authority law enforcement agencies of the various county cities, to be selected by the mayors of those cities; one elected fire commissioner to represent all of the rural fire districts, chosen by them; and one Fire Chief from the Whatcom County Fire Chief's Association, to be chosen by them. The City of Bellingham Fire Chief serves as a non-voting member.

**Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)**

**2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time: 8:00 – 9:00 am**

**Dates: Typically, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month. 1 meeting only in January and December.**

**Location: Meetings are being held in hybrid format. In-person at WTA 4011 Bakerview Spur Road**

**Purpose:** The Board approves matters pertaining to the running of the WTA. Any item over \$150,000 must be brought to the Board for approval. The Board discusses the following: route changes; services offered to the public, service planning; major personnel issues; labor negotiation issues; fiscal issues; funding issues; capital expenditures; major purchases; grants and contracts.

*Noted from WTA: bylaws state 2 representatives serve on the board, does not necessarily have to be the Executive, can be 2 Councilmembers.*

**Whatcom County Tourism Board**

**2026 Meeting Dates:**

**Time: 8:00 – 9:30 am**

**Dates: 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month except July and December**

**Location: varies**

**Purpose:** The organization exists to raise awareness of Whatcom County as a premier year-round travel destination thus bringing economic vitality to its communities.