

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, April 14, 2026
1:35 PM**

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Vice Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 1:46 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Absent: 1 - Elizabeth Boyle

Announcements

Executive Appointment

1. [AB2026-302](#) Request confirmation of the County Executive's appointment of Deborah Arthur as Deputy Executive/Administrative Services Director effective April 13, 2026

Scanlon stated this item is on this agenda for discussion only and is on tonight's Council agenda for confirmation.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, spoke about Arthur and her career experience.

Debbie Arthur, appointee, spoke about her goals and focus as she takes on this role, including strengthening public trust, improving organizational effectiveness, continuing to provide high-level transparency, and being community-centric.

Elenbaas stated he was happy to hear this was the outcome of the appointment.

Scanlon asked about her vision for trying to get to longer term projections to help with budgeting into the future, and she stated she would like to explore having a budgeting office.

Arthur answered how she might build greater transparency in the county, and stated she would like to see financial things (data, metrics, etc....) be more present on the County's website.

Sidhu answered if he could outline the deputy executives' responsibilities, and stated they plan to do that. He and Arthur answered if there are plans to do any back-filling in the EMS office at the moment. Sidhu stated Arthur will be continuing with the EMS work and they are not in a rush to back-fill right now. Arthur stated she would like to get the levy planning started and rolling.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion

Scanlon continued as chair

1. [AB2026-261](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10, Environment

Rienstra moved to begin review of Chapter 10 using preliminary Council draft dated April 14th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by Council members as listed on the chart of proposed Council changes.

The motion was seconded by Elenbaas.

Clerk's note: The revised preliminary Council draft for 4.14.2026 (on file) just included additional staff comments and councilmembers referred to those comments throughout their discussion. They also referred to amendment numbers in the "Chapter 10 - Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.14.2026" (on file) as they made their motions.

Elenbaas stated he wants to make sure the public understands they are just putting preliminary documents (chapters) together so they can gather feedback, and the chapters are not closed for good.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 27 (new section "Water Quality and Quantity")

Galloway moved and Elenbaas seconded to amend the second to last sentence of the section to strike "recent trends in monitoring show that these improvements of the past may be at risk" and insert the staff recommendation which is, "water quality improvements may be at risk" so that the sentence would read, "Unfortunately, water quality improvements may be at risk."

Councilmembers discussed the motion, that if they do not keep their heightened awareness of water quality they risk reverting to a poorer outcome, that this section is broad and does not just refer to one body of water, and that they should make sure natural system functions (with high

nutrient loads and algal blooms) are not hindered by what they are doing.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 32 (new Policy 10F-6)

Galloway moved that they include amendment number 32.

The motion was seconded by Rienstra.

Galloway stated this is in line with development strategies they have been discussing as part of the Comprehensive Plan process that aim to balance the need for development with the needs of our environment and natural resources, and it builds consistency within the Comprehensive Plan.

Elenbaas stated he is concerned that they use the word "require the use of" and then it is not defined. He **moved** to amend the motion to change the word "require" to "encourage."

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Councilmembers discussed the motion and if there is a definition of low-impact sustainable development strategies.

The motion to amend carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

The motion to include Policy 10F-6 as amended carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Buchanan

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas and Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 36 (amending Policy 10H-8)

Galloway moved to include amendment number 36.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Galloway stated she is fine with changing the word “require” to something different but this is getting at what the future of development is going to need to look like. Impervious surface leads to increased stormwater runoff, oftentimes containing chemicals that impair water bodies, so this is trying to do a better job of using development strategies that improve buffers and native shrubs and other sorts of ways to reduce impact.

Elenbaas moved to amend the motion to strike “require” and replace with “encourage,” to change “to ensure increased development...” so that it would say “minimize the effects of increase development so it does not lead to increased impermeable surfaces and increased stormwater runoff,” and so that the first sentence would read:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to minimize the effects of increased development so it does not lead to increased impermeable surfaces and increased stormwater runoff.

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Elenbaas stated his concern is that the way it read before would be a complete and utter prohibition on impermeable surfaces. What we want to do is make sure that any impervious surface can be mitigated in a way that it does not increase runoff, and his language would look at this under a lens that would say they are not going to stop growth, but are going to look for a solution and do it intelligently.

Elenbaas amended his motion so that the first sentence reads:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to minimize the effects of increased development in order to mitigate the effects of increased impermeable surfaces and increased stormwater runoff.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, discussed the motion with councilmembers. They discussed whether there is any concern about the term “low-impact sustainable development” as opposed to “low-impact development” and if it impacts implementation of a policy like this, if the way this is worded hinders Planning’s ability to have incentives in place for people to implement best practices that would replace impervious surfaces, and how this policy might affect how the Planning Department does business.

The motion to amend the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Rienstra, Scanlon, Stremmer, Elenbaas, and Galloway

Nay: 1 - Buchanan

Absent: 1 - Boyle

The motion to include amendment number 36 as amended carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Scanlon, Elenbaas, Galloway, and Rienstra

Nay: 2 - Stremmer and Buchanan

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Elenbaas stated he voted yes for this because it was amending an existing policy, and not voting yes would have left the policy un-amended.

Amendment number 37 (amending Policy 10H-10)

Galloway moved to include amendment number 37.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Galloway stated the State obligates them to achieve no net loss, so encouraging net gain is just aiming to achieve a little higher than that, and she thinks it is their moral responsibility to do the best they can for the environment.

Councilmembers spoke in favor of the motion, and they and Mark Personius discussed what the incentives are to encouraging a net gain of ecological function in critical areas.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 38 (amending Policy 10H-12)

Galloway moved to include number 38 but with the staff's recommendation, which would involve amending the first sentence of section 5 so that it reads:

Focus on the Lake Whatcom watershed as a high priority in implementing stormwater management programs and ensuring the proper function of public and private stormwater systems.

The motion was seconded by Rienstra.

Galloway stated she is fine with the staff recommendation for the language and that it gets at what she is looking to achieve.

Councilmembers discussed how the staff recommended language around “ensuring the proper function of...” would be different than the language originally proposed by Galloway (“including inspections of...”), and that the staff’s language reads more as a value, while Galloway’s language was the implementation of that value. It is also likely a body of work that has been identified since the last major Comprehensive Plan update.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 39 (new Policy 10H-13)

Galloway moved to approve the staff recommendations for amendment number 39, for new Policy 10H-13.

She stated it would break the first and second sentence into two policies (new policies 10H-13 and 10H-14), replace “toxics” with “water quality,” and remove the work “toxic” from “toxic pollution.”

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Elenbaas stated he believes these goals are unnecessary and a sort of unfunded mandate for staff where they already have a fairly well thought-through program that the public participates in, and that does not preclude anyone else from doing it as well.

Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department, answered whether presenting technical expertise already occurs in the Marine Resources Committee, and whether it would require county staffing or funding in order to be able to do what the policy is saying.

Galloway stated there are no specific fiscal requests from this at this time but it is just reinforcing what they do and also giving them the grounds to continue and expand that should the need arise.

Scanlon stated he is concerned about potentially adding unfunded staffing levels or costs to the county.

The motion *failed* by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Galloway, Rienstra, and Buchanan

Nay: 3 - Elenbaas, Scanlon, and Stremmler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Kiana Oos, Council Office Staff, stated the proposed amendment was already preliminarily approved at the Council's last April 7 meeting, so she wanted to clarify if Council would like this policy to not be included in the final ordinance or to be included in the form before the amendments that were made today.

Elenbaas moved to not include (strike) new policy 10H-13.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Rienstra, Scanlon, Stremmler, and Elenbaas

Nay: 2 - Galloway and Buchanan

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 40 (Policy 10I-5)

Galloway moved to include the original staff recommendation for Policy 10I-5 (amendment number 40) which reads:

Encourage water users and purveyors to quantify water use and make the data publicly available to promote conservation.

The motion was seconded by Elenbaas.

Galloway stated from what she can tell, the original Chapter 10 language said "Quantify water use to promote conservation." Then, it appears as a part of this update, staff's recommendation was, as read into the record (to "encourage"). Then, it appears the Planning Commission struck this policy in its entirety. So, if they vote no on this motion, it would revert back to the Planning Commission recommendation, which just removed this policy altogether. The "encourage" part reflects the original staff recommendation prior to the Planning Commission's review of the chapter.

Stoyka answered, given the previous concerns, if there are any concerns

about using the term “encourage” here or about the text shown on the screen, and he stated he does not think there are any issues.

Elenbaas stated he would vote yes on this version of the language, but he would rather just not include the language at all. A no vote on this motion would go back to the Planning Commission recommendation which is nothing (to remove the policy).

Councilmembers discussed how this proposed language came to be, that the Planning Unit changed the original staff version to insert the word “require,” if they should just go back to the 2016 language for this policy which read, “Quantify water use to promote conservation,” what a “water user” is, and whether data being publicly available applies to private systems as well as public.

The motion *failed* by the following vote:
Aye: 3 - Rienstra, Buchanan, and Galloway
Nay: 3 - Scanlon, Stremmler, and Elenbaas
Absent: 1 - Boyle

Elenbaas moved that, pursuant to the Planning Commission's recommendation, they remove Policy 10I-5.

The motion was seconded by Stremmler.

Stoyka answered how the 2016 policy was put into practice, and stated they do not do anything with quantifying water use and he does not think the Health Department does either. He stated he thinks the purpose was to be a tool for the water user.

Scanlon stated he would like to go back to the language which says, “Quantify water use to promote conservation” if this motion does not pass.

Elenbaas spoke about how he might amend the language if this motion fails, but that he is partial to the deletion of it.

The motion *failed* by the following vote:
Aye: 2 - Stremmler and Elenbaas
Nay: 4 - Scanlon, Buchanan, Galloway, and Rienstra
Absent: 1 - Boyle

Scanlon moved to revert back to the 2021 version where Policy 10I-5 simply states, “Quantify water use to promote conservation.”

The motion was seconded by Galloway.

Elenbaas suggested a friendly amendment to amend the policy to say, "Encourage quantification of water use to help promote conservation."

Scanlon accepted the friendly amendment.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 41(new Policy 10J-9)

Galloway moved to include amendment number 41 but to amend it so that it reads:

Policy 10J-9: Update County phosphorus neutral development code in the Lake Whatcom watershed, with a goal of meeting or exceeding the standards set by the corresponding City of Bellingham policies to ensure they are protective of lake water quality.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Galloway stated she believes it is really important to be clear that our goal is to meet or exceed the city of Bellingham's policy. Primarily the interest is in consistency, as well as making sure that we are updating our code using best available science and best management practices.

Elenbaas stated he does not want this version but also thinks they do not need this language.

Stoyka answered why staff recommended to remove "a goal of meeting or exceeding the standards set by the corresponding City of Bellingham policies," and stated the way he read it was that the goal was just to meet whatever the City of Bellingham did, instead of the goal being the development codes need to be updated because they represent a water quality issue. He does not, however have concerns with the way the proposed amendment is written.

Elenbaas stated he would prefer language that says they are "in alignment with" and to do the best that they can.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas and Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 42 (new Policy 10J-10)

Elenbaas moved that they strike new Policy 10J-10.

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Elenbaas stated staff did a wonderful job in their comments and he read the staff comment. Staff recommends deleting the policy.

Galloway stated her interest in this is just getting to an improved monitoring and inspection of both public and private stormwater systems. If a previous amendment got to that she is agnostic if they want to strike it or propose something slightly different.

The motion *failed* by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Elenbaas, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 3 - Buchanan, Galloway, and Rienstra

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Galloway moved to amend Policy 10J-10 so that it reads:

Use BMPs as approved by the Department of Ecology and ensure proper functionality to minimize development impacts within the Lake Whatcom watershed through regular monitoring and inspections of public and private stormwater systems.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Galloway stated she is trying to incorporate staff's comments and retain the interest in what this is hoping for, which is minimizing development impacts on the drinking watershed, and doing that through regular monitoring and inspections of stormwater systems.

Stoyka stated the biggest concern was that it was implying that the county was out there testing or determining what BMPs work, and they really do not do that. He thinks this addresses the main concern though.

Scanlon suggested a friendly amendment to strike "and ensure proper functionality" from the stated motion so it would read:

Use BMPs as approved by the Department of Ecology to minimize development impacts within the Lake Whatcom watershed through regular monitoring and inspections of public and private stormwater systems.

Galloway accepted the friendly amendment.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 1 - Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 50 (new Policy 10K-9)

Elenbaas moved that they remove Policy 10K-9.

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Elenbaas stated if staff has any concern over this language (which they do) they should just not include it because they have all of Chapter 11 which covers shoreline permitting and development.

Galloway stated she is fine striking this and moving to the next amendment.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Stremler, Buchanan, Elenbaas

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment numbers 56 and 57 (new policies 10L-7 and 10L-8)

Elenbaas moved to strike amendment numbers 56 and 57 (new policies 10L-7 and 10L8).

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Elenbaas stated this is specific to armoring and he believes it is all covered in Chapter 11, which is probably the appropriate place for it to be covered.

Galloway stated she would rather just approve the Planning staff

recommendation for revised language on this. She stated Lucas Clark, Planning and Development Services Department, just sent an email that included alternative language for Policy 10L-7 and a minor amendment to 10L-8.

Elenbaas cautioned against operating outside of the Shoreline Management Program process by addressing shoreline management in Chapter 10.

The motion *failed* by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Stremmler and Elenbaas

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

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Galloway moved to include the staff revised versions for amendment numbers 56 and 57 as follows:

Policy 10L-7 Explore ways to fund an updated mapping of shoreline armoring and/or use Ecology's updated shoreline conditions inventory to create a database of existing shoreline armoring.

Policy 10L-8: Ensure that amendments to the Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinances protect marine shorelines. Seek ways to reduce existing shoreline armoring, prevent expansion that would impact forage fish spawning and salmonid migratory pathways, and re-establish or widen intertidal corridors for migrating juvenile salmon that have been lost due to shoreline armoring.

The motion was seconded by Rienstra.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, answered questions about whether they are concerned that making changes in Chapter 10 might open it up to challenge or review since they have an approved shoreline management plan (SMP) through the Department of Ecology, or if policies in Chapter 10 would be considered as changing the SMP.

Scanlon spoke about how mapping some of these systems may be helpful as it relates to sea level rise.

Rienstra stated she is reading it a little bit differently and does not share the concerns she is hearing.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Scanlon, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra

Nay: 2 - Stremler and Elenbaas

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 59 (amending Policy 10L-12, renumbered to 10L-14)

Galloway moved to amend the last sentence of Policy 10L-14 to reflect staff comments so that the policy reads:

In coordination with FLIP, consider establishing formal channel migration zones for the Nooksack River, precluding additional development within these zones, actively pursue voluntary acquisitions to promote flood risk reduction and riverine and marine shoreline restoration. Work with property owners on levee setback projects to provide more flood storage and improve natural river processes and meandering, riparian buffers, and salmon habitat.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Councilmembers discussed the motion and Elenbaas stated he hopes they never interpret the word “development” to include things that they do and need to do within those areas outside of housing (such as roads, agricultural buildings, or other things that would prevent the ability to farm).

Gary Stoyka answered what the difference is in the previous definition which said “formal meander limits” and the current proposed language which says “formal channel migration zones.” He stated he thinks “channel migration zones” is a legal definition, and that they did not think the language here was problematic.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Elenbaas stated he would like the Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee to weigh in to the Council more on language like this since there are quite a few new people on the advisory committee, and Stoyka stated the committee did weigh in over a year ago but they can see if they can get input on the later version of this.

Amendment number 60 (new Policy 10L-15)

Galloway moved to include amendment number 60 and to reflect the staff's comments so that Policy 10L-15 would read:

During and after emergency flood repairs, ensure that any repair is mitigated to applicable permitting conditions to reduce impacts to salmon habitat.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Galloway stated as they recover in big infrastructure ways, they should be redeveloping that infrastructure in a way that minimizes impacts to salmon habitat.

Stoyka answered what kind of influence the County has over the Army Corps of Engineers if they are doing emergency repairs on the levees which would be impacting salmon habitat, and if he sees any ability for the County to follow through with this goal in a situation like that. He stated he was thinking more about projects that the County implements. The point was to clarify that they mitigate to the permitting conditions, and depending on what is approved in the permit, that may or may not be fully mitigated.

Elenbaas suggested a friendly amendment to amend the motion so that the policy would address County work and would read:

During and after emergency flood repairs conducted by Whatcom County, ensure that any repair is mitigated to applicable permitting conditions to reduce impacts to salmon habitat.

Galloway accepted the friendly amendment.

Stoyka answered whether it would apply to maintenance and operation work on roads, and stated he does not believe so. It would likely be for projects that have some sort of in-water work or salmon-bearing stream impact work. He answered questions about how he would interpret "emergency" in this policy.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 65 (new Policy 10N-2)

Elenbaas stated he is wondering if this is an attempt by the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) to get more staff time and more County budget to do more of what they want to do, but that the Council has to balance that with the needs of other committees.

Scanlon moved to include amendment number 65 (new Policy 10N-2).

The motion was seconded by Elenbaas.

Galloway stated, if the concern is directly referencing the MRC, they could strike that reference, but the question becomes whether they still feel that the projects and data within the cited examples are worthy of incorporating in or informing county planning processes. If there is a way to amend this to get to a yes, she would interested in that.

Councilmembers discussed what this is trying to fix, how it relates to policies in amendment numbers 66-71, when the Marine Resources Committee started, and if they provided comments on the last Comprehensive Plan.

Gary Stoyka stated they have been around since 1999 or 2000 and have been pretty good about providing comments on the Comprehensive Plan.

Elenbaas stated the proposed policy almost seems like it is trying to use citizen science instead of the State's or NOAA's data, and seems like a large shift in policy.

Galloway suggested a friendly amendment to amend the policy so that it reads:

Incorporate projects and data collection such as kelp and eelgrass monitoring, forage fish monitoring, Olympia oyster restoration, water quality monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, beach cleanups, mussel watch, and European green crab monitoring to inform County planning processes.

Councilmembers discussed the suggested friendly amendment.

Scanlon amended his motion to add in "the Marine Resources Committee's" before the word "kelp" so that the policy would read:

Incorporate projects and data collection such as the Marine Resources Committee's kelp and eelgrass monitoring, forage fish

monitoring, Olympia oyster restoration, water quality monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, beach cleanups, mussel watch, and European green crab monitoring to inform County planning processes.

Elenbaas stated he would still prefer to not incorporate these goals.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas and Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment numbers 66-67 (new policies 10N-4 and 10N-5)

Scanlon moved to include amendment numbers 66 and 67.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Elenbaas stated there are many things that can harm eelgrass populations that the County cannot regulate or do anything about, and cautioned against adding the language because it is out of the county's purview and control. Addressing the shoreline management plan *is* in their purview and control and they have already gone over that rigorously. He also spoke about funding.

Scanlon amended the motion to change 10N-5 (amendment 67) to say "Explore external grant opportunities to fund mapping Whatcom County eelgrass and kelp beds to establish a baseline dataset, and add this data to statewide maps used in planning and development."

Both policies would read:

Policy 10N-4: Conserve kelp and eelgrass as critical marine resources, recognizing their importance in providing diverse and productive ecosystems, contribute to carbon and nutrient sequestration, and help protect and stabilize coastal environments. Ensure any potential commercial opportunities are pursued responsibly.

Policy 10N-5: Explore external grant opportunities to fund mapping Whatcom County eelgrass and kelp beds to establish a baseline dataset, and add this data to statewide maps used in planning and development.

Galloway stated the MRC is predominately funded by State and Federal grants and it leverages volunteer work, so she does not see this as having an impact on local funds.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Buchanan

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas and Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Amendment number 69 (new Policy 10N-7)

Scanlon moved to include amendment number 69 (Policy 10N-7).

The motion was seconded by Galloway.

Elenbaas suggested a friendly amendment to strike the word “decreasing” before “water quality” so that the policy reads:

Monitor current trends for population growth, aging infrastructure, water quality, and climate change, and how these factors impact the state of marine resources and reduced populations of salmon, forage fish, kelp, and eelgrass. Measure county progress towards restoration.

Scanlon accepted the friendly amendment.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 1 - Stremler

Absent: 1 - Boyle

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated staff can prepare another preliminary Council draft for their next meeting on this chapter and it will reflect the items that are still pending.

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

MOTION 1

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 10 using preliminary Council draft dated April 14th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by Council members as listed on the chart of proposed Council changes.

MOTION 2 – Amendment number 27

Motion approved to amend the second to last sentence to strike "recent trends in monitoring show that these improvements of the past may be at risk" and insert "water quality improvements may be at risk" so that the sentence would read, "Unfortunately, water quality improvements may be at risk."

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend the motion to include amendment number 32 to change the word "require" to "encourage" in amendment number 32.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to include amendment number 32 from the amendment chart to add new policy 10F-6 as amended which reads:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to ensure water quality and quantity. Strategies may include installing water catchment systems.

MOTION 5

Motion approved to amend the motion to include amendment number 36 (10H-8) to change the first sentence so that it reads:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to minimize the effects of increased development in order to mitigate the effects of increased impermeable surfaces and increased stormwater runoff.

MOTION 6

Motion approved to include amendment number 36 in the amendment chart as amended (in motion 5).

MOTION 7

Motion approved to include amendment number 37 from the chart of amendments.

MOTION 8

Motion approved to include amendment number 38 (from the chart of amendments) with the staff's recommendation to amend the first sentence of section 5 so that that sentence reads:

Focus on the Lake Whatcom watershed as a high priority in implementing stormwater management programs and ensuring the proper function of public and private stormwater systems.

MOTION 9

Motion approved to strike new policy 10H-13 (amendment number 39).

MOTION 10

Motion approved to amend Policy 10I-5 so that it reads:

Encourage quantification of water use to help promote conservation.

MOTION 11

Motion approved to include amendment number 41 and to amend it so that it reads:

Policy 10J-9: Update County phosphorus neutral development code in the Lake Whatcom watershed, with a goal of meeting or exceeding the standards set by the corresponding City of Bellingham policies to ensure they are protective of lake water quality.

MOTION 12

Motion approved to amend Policy 10J-10 so that it reads:

Use BMPs as approved by the Department of Ecology to minimize development impacts within the Lake Whatcom watershed through regular monitoring and inspections of public and private stormwater systems.

MOTION 13

Motion approved that they remove Policy 10K-9 (amendment number 50).

MOTION 14

Motion approved to include the staff revised versions for amendment numbers 56 and 57 so that they read:

Policy 10L-7 Explore ways to fund an updated mapping of shoreline armoring and/or use Ecology's updated shoreline conditions inventory to create a database of existing shoreline armoring.

Policy 10L-8: Ensure that amendments to the Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinances protect marine shorelines. Seek ways to reduce existing shoreline armoring, prevent expansion that would impact forage fish spawning and salmonid migratory pathways, and re-establish or widen intertidal corridors for migrating juvenile salmon that have been lost due to shoreline armoring.

MOTION 15

Motion approved to amend the last sentence of Policy 10L-14 (amendment number 59) so that the policy reads:

In coordination with FLIP, consider establishing formal channel migration zones for the Nooksack River, precluding additional development within these zones, actively pursue voluntary acquisitions to promote flood risk reduction and riverine and marine shoreline restoration. Work with property owners on levee setback projects to provide more flood storage and improve natural river processes and meandering, riparian buffers, and salmon habitat.

MOTION 16

Motion approved to include amendment number 60 to reflect the staff's comments so that new Policy 10L-15 would read:

During and after emergency flood repairs conducted by Whatcom County, ensure that any repair is mitigated to applicable permitting conditions to reduce impacts to salmon habitat.

MOTION 17

Motion approved to include amendment number 65 (new Policy 10N-2) as amended so that it reads:

Incorporate projects and data collection such as the Marine Resources Committee's kelp and eelgrass monitoring, forage fish monitoring, Olympia oyster restoration, water quality monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, beach cleanups, mussel watch, and European green crab monitoring to inform County planning processes.

MOTION 18

Motion approved to include amendment numbers 66 and 67 (new policies 10N-4 and 10N-5) and amend number 67 so that the policies read:

Policy 10N-4: Conserve kelp and eelgrass as critical marine resources, recognizing their importance in providing diverse and productive ecosystems, contribute to carbon and nutrient sequestration, and help protect and stabilize coastal environments. Ensure any potential commercial opportunities are pursued responsibly.

Policy 10N-5: Explore external grant opportunities to fund mapping Whatcom County eelgrass and kelp beds to establish a baseline data set, and add this data to statewide maps used in planning and development.

MOTION 19

Motion approved to include amendment number 69 (Policy 10N-7) as amended to strike the word "decreasing" so that it reads:

Policy 10N-7: Monitor current trends for population growth, aging infrastructure, water quality, and climate change, and how these factors impact the state of marine resources and reduced populations of salmon, forage fish, kelp, and eelgrass. Measure county progress towards restoration.

2. [AB2026-262](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 12, Climate

This agenda item was NOT ACTED UPON.

3. [AB2026-263](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Appendices (Appendix A: Glossary, Appendix B: Acronyms, Appendix D: Bibliography, Appendix E: 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan, Appendix G: Airport Overlay Zones, Appendix H: Airport Imaginary Surfaces, Appendix I: Housing Needs Analysis, Appendix J: Subsidized Housing Needs and Funding) and Foothills Subarea Plan Amendments

This agenda item was NOT ACTED UPON.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

Councilmembers and Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, discussed the

possibility of adding another meeting to discuss this and the other chapters they did not get to today on April 21st.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on April 28, 2026.

ATTEST:



WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger