

PROPOSED BY: PUBLIC WORKS
INTRODUCED: MAY X, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL, REGARDING GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION SUBELEMENT VOLUNTARY REVIEW, AS PART OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE UNDER THE WASHINGTON STATE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (RCW 36.70A.096)

WHEREAS, the Washington Growth Management Act (RCW Chapter 36.70A) requires that Whatcom County and other jurisdictions within Whatcom County adopt comprehensive plans; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County is using a phased approach to the periodic update, with the Whatcom County Council reviewing and preliminarily approving drafts of each chapter individually before taking final action on the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety at a later date; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee issued its recommendation for revisions to the advisory committee Climate Element draft on March 20th, 2025; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the submittal procedure for voluntary review of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction subelement in WAC 365-196-443, Whatcom County submitted a Notice of Intent to the Washington State Department of Commerce on June 23rd, 2025; and

WHEREAS, County staff presented the draft climate element for a Planning Commission work session on May 8th, 2025 and supporting technical documentation to the Whatcom County Council on June 10th, 2025 and at a joint Planning Commission-Council meeting on August 6th, 2025; and

WHEREAS, County staff presented the Whatcom County Planning Commission with the draft climate element for public hearing on August 14th, 2025, including a Summary of Public Comments, WA Department of Commerce Whatcom County 2022 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis, 2025 Whatcom County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trends and Projections Reports, and 2025 Whatcom County Climate Hazard and Impact Reports as supporting documentation; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Planning Commission issued a preliminary recommendation for the draft climate element on September 30th, 2025 with eighteen recommended amendments; and

WHEREAS, County staff presented the Whatcom County Council with the Planning Commission recommendation on November 5th, including supporting supplementary staff memos dated September 30th, 2025 and November 5th, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan on January 22nd, 2026; and

WHEREAS, consistent with notice requirements in RCW 36.70A.106, on January

29th, 2026, Whatcom County staff provided the WA State Department of Commerce with a notice of intent to adopt the comprehensive plan at least 60 days prior to final local adoption; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County received a letter from the WA State Department of Commerce dated February 13th, 2026 regarding the draft Whatcom County greenhouse gas reduction subelement; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Council began review of the draft climate element on April 7th, 2026 using the Preliminary Council draft dated 4.7.2026, which was the Planning Commission version from January 22nd, 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Council completed review of the draft climate element on x, 2026 with x recommended amendments and approved a motion to request staff prepare Chapter 12- Preliminary Council Draft dated x as amended for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

Commented [LC1]: Note: this resolution would be discussed at May 19th COTW and introduced after Council has completed its review and initial recommendation on the climate element.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County is voluntarily seeking approval of the greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan under RCW 36.70A.096; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that Council will sign a cover letter requesting approval of the subelement to be submitted following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that within 10 days of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Whatcom County Council directs staff to submit the greenhouse gas reduction subelement application for Commerce review following the requirements listed in RCW 36.70A.096(3)(b); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that the adoption ordinance for the comprehensive plan update will state that the effective date of the greenhouse gas reduction subelement is upon approval by the WA State Department of Commerce; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that the department's final decision to approve or reject the subelement will be provided within 180 days of the date of receipt of application and may be appealed as provided in RCW 36.70A.096; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that there will be no further modifications by the County to the proposed greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement during the current update cycle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that any modifications by Whatcom County after the department's final decision will cancel legal protections as provided in RCW 36.70A.280; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that the climate element shall be subject to continuing review and evaluation by Whatcom County. If Whatcom County amends the greenhouse gas reduction subelement in between the mandatory periodic update cycle, as allowed in RCW 36.70A.130(2), the subelement must be resubmitted for WA Department of Commerce review and approval.

APPROVED this ____day of _____, 2026

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin approved via email 5/11/26
Senior Civil Deputy Prosecutor