

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, September 13, 2022

3:15 PM

Hybrid Meeting

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

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2022-471](#) Presentation by the Whatcom Conservation District on a proposed system of rates and charges to implement the District's work program

The following people presented:

- Heather Christianson, Chair of the Board of Supervisors for the Whatcom Conservation District
- Brandy Reed, Whatcom Conservation District
- Brooke Tacia, FCS Group

They answered a concern from Kershner that the residential sector is picking up the majority of the cost throughout the whole county and whether that is equitable considering the work the Conservation District does and the population they work with.

Elenbaas spoke about a concern with asking people to pay more and stated he would prefer they all put the pressure on our legislators to ask the State not to pull the Conservation District funding and to approve the grants. He supports the Conservation District and fully funding Conservation District projects, but he is not supportive of this mechanism of funding.

Frazey stated she would support it as they go forward and spoke about the importance of the Conservation District's work.

Steve Oliver, County Treasurer, asked whether there is a provision to exempt low income seniors and disabled persons who would otherwise be exempt from property taxes.

Rebecca Xczar, County Assessor, stated her office was not really involved in this process and asked if they could be involved going forward.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, answered whether the Ordinance being prepared will loop in the Assessor and the Treasurer and what timeframe they would be looking at. She spoke about the process and that we would need at least a couple more weeks to get an Ordinance prepared. Then it would go to Council introduction and we would need about four weeks in between introduction and a hearing.

Oliver stated that for districts that are submitting assessment rolls to be included on the property tax statement, the Treasurer's Office typically requires those to be submitted in October so that they can start building the tax roll and have the tax roll certified and bills printed in a timely manner in the beginning of next year. This is a tight timeline for everybody.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2022-453](#) Discussion of a broadband policy for Whatcom County

Galloway briefed the Councilmembers, read from a memo (on file), and answered questions.

The following people also answered questions:

- Chris Heimgartner, Whatcom Public Utility District (PUD)
- Christine Grant, Whatcom Public Utility District (PUD) Commission

They answered whether it is prudent to put in all this infrastructure if it might be obsolete in a few years, whether fiber optics should just go where it is needed without overdoing it, how the Port of Bellingham and PUD and the County are working together and whether they are going in the same direction, how the Council gets the Planning Department on board for things like mapping and notification so they know what to do when the County goes to work with the cities and the PUD, and why some jurisdictions have adopted Ordinances that say once infrastructure is put in you cannot re-dig it after a couple of years.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2022-451](#) Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Chapter 5.04, Ambulance Franchises, to address diversity, equity, and inclusion on the EMS Oversight Board and EMS Technical Advisory Committee and to define the process and elements of an EMS

Levy Service Plan

Frazey briefed the Councilmembers and referred to the memo (on file). She stated these are some of the highest paid positions in our community and making sure everyone in the culture is inclusive would be important as we move forward.

Elenbaas stated he would like to point out that these jobs are not only some of the highest paid jobs in Whatcom County, they are also some of the hardest and most dangerous and you have to be probably the most well-trained with a ton of liability that goes along with that job. It is not a job where someone just shows up and they can take anyone. There is a reason that they are well paid.

Councilmembers discussed whether this Ordinance applies just to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Oversight Board and the Technical Advisory Committee or to all involved in our local EMS services, how much these changes will cost the EMS budget, and how EMS would track the information the Ordinance is requesting.

Galloway moved and Buchanan seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, Galloway, and Kershner

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on September 27, 2022.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

SIGNED COPY ON FILE

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription