

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

1 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - 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

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-191](#) Presentation from Public Works regarding the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit and the Lake Whatcom Management Program
PRESENTED
2. [AB2026-198](#) Presentation by the Health and Community Services Housing Team on housing programs including severe winter shelter, Q4 program data, and upcoming priorities and funding
PRESENTED

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-037](#) Update on 2026 State Legislative Session
DISCUSSED
2. [AB2026-211](#) Discussion of an ordinance authorizing a sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent for criminal justice purposes as authorized by RCW 82.14.345 and adding a new Chapter 3.27 Sales and Use Tax for Criminal Justice Purposes to the Whatcom County Code
DISCUSSED
3. [AB2026-185](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1, Introduction and Growth Projections
DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to amend to add the language in amendment #21 to Policy 1C-6 and to change “public works” to “public work” so that Policy 1C-6 would read:

Through fair and open competition, leverage county resources and investments in public work to empower and uplift a local and diverse workforce for all.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to request that staff prepare “Chapter 1 - Preliminary Council Draft for 3.10.2026,” as amended, for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

5. [AB2026-188](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 3, Housing

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED**MOTION 1**

Motion approved to amend Chapter 3 to approve the added language highlighted in blue as noted in amendment number 48 which adds new policies 3A-5 and 3A-6 as follows:

Policy 3A-5: Where provisions of the Comprehensive Plan are subject to more than one reasonable interpretation, apply the interpretation that most effectively advances the County's adopted housing supply and affordability objectives, provided that such interpretation:

- Remains consistent with the Growth Management Act.
- Does not diminish required protections for critical areas or designated resource lands.
- Maintains internal consistency among Comprehensive Plan elements.

Policy 3A-6: Periodically review development regulations and administrative practices to identify and eliminate unnecessary ambiguity that may unintentionally constrain housing supply or increase housing costs.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend Chapter 3 as noted in amendments numbers 49-51 to strike reference to family.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend Chapter 3 to add a new policy 3B-5 as noted in amendment number 52, but with the first sentence stricken, so it reads:

Future zoning decisions should protect public health and community well-being by ensuring adequate separation between incompatible land uses. This includes avoiding or minimizing residential uses in close proximity to heavy industrial activities whenever possible and implementing appropriate buffering, siting, and design measures where such proximity cannot reasonably be avoided.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to amend Chapter 3 as noted in amendment number 53 so that the section Quantifiable Targets on page 3-24 and 25 reads:

Quantifiable Targets and Outcomes

The breadth of data identified in the U.S. Census, Land Capacity Analysis, Housing Needs Assessment, Buildable Lands Report and other sources provide a foundation for monitoring and quantifying the outcomes of policy. Use the Buildable Lands Report to review and evaluate whether Whatcom County has achieved its goals and policies and work to implement any identified reasonable measures necessary to reduce the differences between growth and development assumptions contained in the county and cities comprehensive plans with actual development patterns. By developing policies which are measurable, the County can further track results and identify needed actions.

MOTION 5

Motion approved to request that staff prepare the "Chapter 3 - Preliminary Council Draft for 3.10.2026~~1111~~," as amended, for legal review and inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

MOTION 6

Motion approved that they include updated table one in the Chapter three preliminary Council draft version that staff will prepare for legal review.

4. [AB2026-186](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive

Plan Chapter 2, Land Use

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to approve proposed amendment numbers 92-95, 98-111, 114, 116-118, 124-128, 130-132, and glossary items 1 and 2.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend Policy 2N-8 of Chapter 2 as noted in amendment number 91 (with scrivener's errors corrected as presented on the screen) so that it reads:

Encourage provision of serviced industrial sites by cities. Where applicable, within urban growth areas, preserve the regulatory ability of existing industries to continue operating, if proposed for rezoning, and protect existing industrial and maritime zoned developments from encroachment by incompatible uses and developments on adjacent lands. Protective measures should include but may not be limited to the adoption of notice of disclosure requirements.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend a phrase in Policy 2C-7 to read "may be levied" so that the policy reads:

To defray the costs of infrastructure and service improvements required by development in areas under county jurisdiction, Construction Impact Fees, may be levied as per state law.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to amend Chapter 2 to add Policy 2GG-4 which reads:

Land in the R10A district may not be rezoned to a rural zone that allows a higher density if it is located in the current or future flood plain or a sea level rise inundation zone.

MOTION 5

Motion approved that they continue discussion on the preliminary Chapter 2 as amended March 10th, 2026 at next week's Special Committee of the Whole meeting on March 17th, picking up where we left off, starting with amendment number 115 and the remaining amendments they did not get to today.

Items Added by Revision**Other Business****Adjournment**