

Whatcom County Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

9:50 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 11:40 A.M.(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA REVISION 6.22.2026**

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

Committee Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Rienstra moved to recommend approval of Consent Agenda items one through 13. The motion was seconded by Boyle.

Councilmembers asked questions on several consent items.

Consent Agenda item #2 (AB2026-449)

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, answered if the amount not used for the loan will just stay in the economic development investment (EDI) fund, and stated anything that becomes unencumbered through these types of amendments would go back to that fund in order to retain a strategic reserve.

Consent Agenda item #10 (AB2026-482)

Scanlon stated due to state cuts, we are having a decline in our funding for the Alternate Response Team (ART) program.

Consent Agenda item #12 (AB2026-484)

Melissa Keeley, Administrative Services Department Human Resources, answered if anything came out of the new agreement that would help with costs for ferry operations or operational flexibility. She stated Public Works management had an interest in gaining some operational efficiency through this contract and she thinks a compromise was made. Management did not get everything they were hoping for, but it is a step in the right direction. She described the changes in the agreement.

Consent Agenda item #9 (AB2026-481)

Hannah Fisk, Health and Community Services, answered if this is a new contract and stated it is an existing service, but it went out for a request for

proposal (RFP) after the typical four-year cycle, so it is a new contract with a new vendor (Pioneer Human Services). The level of service will stay consistent. She stated the funding is from the criminal justice treatment account and comes straight to us from the Health Care Authority.

Councilmembers voted on the Consent items (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2026-345](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation for a radio tower lease, in the amount of \$0

Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

2. [AB2026-449](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham to lower the loan principal amount to \$844,961.62, which reflects the actual amount dispersed and results in a total contract amount of \$2,899,813

Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

3. [AB2026-462](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission for a wellness grant, in the amount of \$41,200

Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

4. [AB2026-464](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Transportation for the renewal of youth zero fare policy, in the amount of \$260,250 for a total of \$363,000

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

5. [AB2026-466](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation to move forward with the design phase of the Everson Goshen Road and East Smith Road Intersection Improvements project, in the amount of \$300,000

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

6. [AB2026-471](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a cooperative agreement between Whatcom County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to repair the Bylsma Levee on the Nooksack River, in the amount of \$133,160 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract (FCZDBS) be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

7. [AB2026-474](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a cooperative agreement between Whatcom County and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to repair the Ritter Road levee along the left bank of the Nooksack River, in the amount of \$116,100 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract (FCZDBS) be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

8. [AB2026-477](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide basic needs items to

families with children ages 0-5 who qualify, in the amount of \$40,131 for a total amended contract amount of \$151,192

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

9. [AB2026-481](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Pioneer Human Services to deliver substance use disorder assessments and provide post-assessment treatment coordination as a component of re-entry for individuals released from jail, in the amount of \$101,896

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

10. [AB2026-482](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to decrease funding, due to state budget reductions, for the Alternative Response Team (ART) program grant, in the amount of \$176,000, for a total amended agreement amount of \$4,385,000

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

11. [AB2026-483](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) to provide training and consultation to the County and local agencies related to improving employment outcomes and the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their communities, in the amount of \$59,500

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

12. [AB2026-484](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a Collective Bargaining Agreement between Whatcom County and the union representing Lummi Island ferry operations workers in the Public Works Department covering 2026 to 2028

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

13. [AB2026-485](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) for funding for employment and community inclusion services for adults with developmental disabilities, child development services for children ages birth to three years, and community information and training, in the amount of \$6,194,426

**Rienstra moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-444](#) Presentation from the Port of Bellingham on economic development activities in Whatcom County

Tyler Schroeder, Port of Bellingham Economic Development, read from a presentation (on file) on economic development work in the last year and the upcoming 2027-2031 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) project. He highlighted work they have done related to strengthening Whatcom County's economic base through business development, and work on infrastructure, and workforce development. He spoke about the upcoming CEDS and its priorities and goals. He answered questions about the future of the Technology Development Center and the old tissue warehouse on the waterfront, and the barriers to attracting and growing our industrial job base.

Scanlon spoke about thinking about how the CEDS might be able to help the Council as they implement the Comprehensive Plan and set priorities, and

how the Council can support the CEDS through the budget.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2026-469](#) Report from the Superior Court Clerk's Office

Raylene King, Superior Court Clerk, read from a presentation (on file) on the function, structure, and responsibilities of the Clerk's Office and how the office is separate from the judicial branch, the increase of case filings and caseloads since 2018 and how the numbers compare to other counties, other roles of the clerk, and the office's challenges and accomplishments.

Ryan Swinburnson, Deputy Director for the Conflict Office, presented on what the office is. He stated they are essentially a second Public Defender's Office and take the cases the Public Defender's Office cannot take for conflict reasons. The County has saved money by not having to hire outside attorneys for that work. He spoke about the impending state-mandated reduced caseload standards and that there is going to be a need for probably 10-12 additional public defense attorneys (as well as many other additional staff) over the course of the next nine years, and that the Conflict Office will need to grow to accommodate that.

Scanlon stated the Council is going to discuss the County's legislative agenda later today and the unfunded state mandates will probably be a part of that discussion. He asked about the rule that if a case conflict presents itself in the office that it applies to the whole office (necessitating them going to an outside attorney) and if that is state law.

Swinburnson stated the rules come from the Rules of Professional Conduct. He answered if there is any state advocacy on the issue and stated it is not really a state issue but more the way this county has chosen to handle those cases.

Elenbaas thanked them for their office for not being a source of public complaints or negative feedback, and stated he has only heard positive feedback.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

3. [AB2026-487](#) Presentation by the Finance Division and Executive's Office on the 2027-2028 biennium budget process

Scanlon stated this item was withdrawn and will be scheduled for a future meeting.

This agenda item was WITHDRAWN.

4. [AB2026-495](#) Update from Director Melissa Keeley on the Human Resources division
- Melissa Keeley, Administrative Services Department Human Resources, read from a presentation (on file) about Human Resources' efforts to stabilize after changes in staffing and the addition of new technology over the last 18 months, data they use in gaging workload factors (including growth in the number of FTEs), County employee turnover data, collective bargaining work, progress in meeting recommendations from the Matrix consultants regarding complaint policies and procedures, updates on pending items from the Matrix report, and expanded staff and leadership training and professional development provided to County employees.
- Scanlon thanked Keeley for the updates on the Matrix recommendations.
- Keeley discussed with councilmembers how the leadership training is helping leaders to develop people skills, and that new County employees are given dedicated time to review new employee orientation materials and training.
- This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-459](#) Discussion of the procurement process for hearing examiner services
- Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated we have a contract for hearing examiner services, and we are in a year in which we need to do a request for proposal (RFP) so we are looking for Council to identify a couple councilmembers to participate on a selection committee. We are starting a little earlier this year, so we have some more information for the budget, and would also like to get Council's feedback on the scope.
- Elenbaas and Boyle stated they would like to participate in the selection process.
- Galloway moved*** to nominate Councilmember Elenbaas and Councilmember Boyle to serve on the hiring committee for the Hearing Examiner services.
- The motion was seconded by Rienstra.
- The motion carried by the following vote:
Aye: 7 - Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Stremmer, and Boyle
Nay: 0

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

Motion approved to nominate Councilmember Elenbaas and Councilmember Boyle to serve on the hiring committee for the Hearing Examiner services.

2. [AB2026-479](#) Discussion of a draft resolution requiring additional public notice of proposed Whatcom County Council action to increase taxes
- Stremmler briefed the councilmembers and spoke about hearing from the public that they have not felt informed about upcoming Council decisions about new taxes, and that Snohomish County has done something similar recently. He stated this is just a draft for discussion but he hopes they could take action on a resolution before the August break.

Councilmembers discussed the intention that providing notice, as described in the resolution, would not happen until a related agenda item is actually on a Council's agenda, and if it would be better to route people to the site where information is already posted publicly so people can get more engaged and involved with the resources we have.

Jenna Gernand, Council Office Staff, stated the idea would be to direct people to our Council page and just have a very clear overview of any potential tax increase.

Councilmembers and Gernand discussed how broad they should be in the types of agenda items that would be noticed (such as also including discussion items or anything that has a public hearing) and whether that decision would be up to staff or councilmembers, that the Council Office could potentially coordinate with other departments if they would like to request that they also post something on their social media accounts, learning what other communities are doing and building on this resolution to increase community engagement on other bodies of work beyond tax increases, if they might also want to provide a sort of "Tax 101" on that Council page to help people understand things like property taxes, and that more specific information about a proposed tax increase could be posted once an item is on an agenda.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-442](#) Ordinance amending the project budget for the 2015 Girard Street Building Improvement Fund, request no. 1

Scanlon moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be

RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

2. [AB2026-450](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 9, in the amount of \$7,941,775

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director, answered if the items for purchase listed under the Jail Fund in the summary listing are replacement items or new, and stated it is part of a grant with the National Forest Service. They are requesting that the County buy this equipment and they are going to reimburse us, then the County will use it in furtherance of the work they do for the Forest Service.

Scanlon spoke about other items on the listing and that some of them are also covered by grants. He stated the one item of note that has a drawdown of the General Fund is the request for the Public Defender to fund outside conflict attorneys and experts.

Galloway's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 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 11:38 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Jon Scanlon-via email 6/29/2026

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE