

**From:** Jill Nixon  
**To:** Council

**Subject:** Add'l Info on Ordinance amending Council standing committees  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 16, 2024 4:09:00 PM  
**Attachments:** SUMMARY Washington State counties legislative meeting information FINAL.pdf  
TABLE Meeting Information for Counties in WA updated 7.16.2024 FINAL.xlsx  
TABLE Meeting Information for Counties in WA updated 7.16.2024 FINAL.pdf

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Councilmembers,

Following up on your conversation on July 9 in Committee of the Whole on the following agenda item:

[AB2024-420](#) Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code 2.02.080, Standing Committees - Membership, to change the membership of all standing council committees from three members to seven

Attached are a SUMMARY and a TABLE (in both PDF and Excel format) of other counties meeting schedules. This summary builds on data originally gathered by Council staff in late 2023/early 2024. Please note the last week's review was only on meeting schedules, not content.

This information is also uploaded to Legistar. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

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## Organization of County Council/Commissioner and Committees

July 2024

Directions given by councilmembers at their July 9, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting during the discussion of amending the County Council's standing committees were to:

- Look at other county structures
- Categorize the difference between commission counties and charter counties
- Review other modernization and efficiency strategies to implement from other counties
- See the evolution, how the counties grew, how did their county evolve their committee structures

Whatcom County is the 9<sup>th</sup> most populous county in Washington State, per [MRSC.org county profiles](https://www.mrsc.org/county-profiles). Of the top 10 most populated counties, only Benton County has fewer people. Kitsap, Yakima, Whatcom, and Benton counties all have between 200,000 and 300,000 people.

### Look at other county structures

Building on the Council staff's 2023 review of all Washington state charter counties and the top 10 populated counties in Washington State, not including Whatcom County:

#### **Charter Counties**

[Clallam](#) (FT) (*Charter retains the Commissioners' Legislative + Executive function and format*)  
[Clark](#) (PT) (*Council + appointed manager*)  
[King](#) (35 hrs/week)  
[Pierce](#) (FT)  
[San Juan](#) (FT) (*Council + appointed manager*)  
[Snohomish](#) (FT)

#### **Board of Commissioner (non-Charter) Counties**

[Benton](#)  
[Kitsap](#)  
[Skagit](#)  
[Spokane](#)  
[Thurston](#)  
[Yakima](#)

Of the Charter counties (not including Whatcom), only Clark County Councilmembers are part-time (PT). King County Council [current pay rate schedule](#) indicates an expected work schedule of 35 hours per week for councilmembers.

In non-Charter counties, Boards of Commissioners serve as full-time (FT) executives and legislators for the county.

### Categorize the difference between commission counties and charter counties

Number of meeting days per week. Of all counties reviewed, only the Benton County Board of Commissioners has regular meetings on one day per week. Of the remaining counties, all commissions/councils have regularly scheduled public meetings on more than one day. [See list, below.](#)

Committees. None of the Board of Commissioner (non-Charter) counties have separate, topic-specific committees. Instead, they all have regularly-scheduled work sessions built into their week. As these Boards also serve as the Executive branch, often their meeting topics and agendas are organized by department.

Only King, Pierce, and Snohomish County Councils have official subcommittees built into their structure. Pierce County annually establishes via resolution its committees, their purposes, meeting times, and membership. They are not codified. All counties meet from time-to-time as the Board of Health, either within their regular meeting schedule or via additional, separate Board of Health meetings.

Day vs. evening meetings. Snohomish and Pierce County Councils are required to hold one evening meeting in each district every year. In addition, Snohomish County must hold a public hearing in the evening on the annual proposed budget presented by the county executive and on any proposed ordinance to adopt, amend, or repeal a county comprehensive plan. In Pierce County, regular meetings begin at 3:00 p.m. Lengthy meetings can run several hours, into the early evenings. Clark County Council holds one evening meeting per month, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Kitsap County Board of Commissioners holds two regular evening meetings per month, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

### **Other modernization and efficiency strategies to implement from other counties**

On cursory review of the materials available online (meeting agendas, minutes, and code) from King and Pierce counties:

#### **In King County**

- Confirmation of Executive's appointments are done on a consent agenda "Reappointment Consent"
- It appears that in general, the King County Council does not review and approve most contracts (*need to confirm*)
- Public comments are restricted to agenda items, except general public comment on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month.
- All amendments must be submitted in writing before the meeting (there are exceptions) ([KCC 1.24.155 Rule 16: Amendments.](#))

#### **In Pierce County**

- Pierce County Council meets 2x per week in a "study session." Study sessions provide the Council opportunities to study issues, gather and analyze information, and clarify problems. No official legislative actions are taken during Study Sessions and the meetings are open to public attendance.
- In general, the County Council does not review and approve contracts (exceptions include bargaining agreements, publishing legal notices, contracting indebtedness, franchise agreements, interlocal agreements)

#### **Boards and Commissions.**

- In those counties with a separate Council and Executive structure (King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties), all applicants to advisory groups are appointed by the Executive and confirmed by Council.

A deeper review, including engaging the Clerks for the other counties, is required to determine what steps these counties have taken to modernize their meeting structure for efficiency. Factors to review could include:

- ✓ What is the average length of time of regular meetings?
- ✓ How is the meeting culture different from Whatcom County Council?
- ✓ What is the process for making amendments during meetings?

- ✓ What agenda items are different from ours (For example, different contract approval requirements?)
- ✓ Are there councilmember/commissioner speaking time limits that are encouraged or enforced?
- ✓ How much time is allotted to presentations, if any? Are those presentations at committee/work sessions and/or regular meetings?
- ✓ Are public comment time limits enforced? If so, how? What are the rules around public comment periods? How often are general (non-agenda-related) public comments allowed?

**See the evolution, how the counties grew, how did their county evolve their committee structures**

A longer review time is needed to research this question. Such a review will likely require engaging each Council/Commissioner's offices directly, as this history may not be available online for most counties.

## Washington Counties Meeting Information

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Updated July 2024

*\* Week 5: Meetings are included in a fifth week if the schedule specifies a meeting “every week,” which includes months when the regular meeting day (such as every Tuesday) has 5 days per month. If the schedule includes specific days of the month (such as 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, for example), then meetings are not included in the 5<sup>th</sup> week.*

### King County (Charter) 9 councilmembers; 3-6 members per committee:

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Week #	TUESDAYS	WEDNESDAYS
1	Health and human services @ 9:30 a.m. County Council @ 1:30 p.m. Employment and administration committee @ 2 p.m.	Local services and land use @ 9:30 a.m. Regional water quality @ 3 p.m.
2	Government accountability and oversight @ 9:30 a.m. County Council @ 1:30 p.m.	Budget and fiscal management @ 9:30 a.m. Regional policy @ 3 p.m.
3	Transportation, economy, and environment @ 9:30 County Council @ 1:30 p.m.	Local services and land use @ 9:30 a.m. Regional transit @ 3 p.m.
4	Committee of the whole @ 9:30 a.m. County Council @ 1:30 p.m.	Budget and fiscal management @ 9:30 a.m. Law and justice @ 1 p.m.
5*		

### Pierce County (Charter) 7 Council Members, 4 or 5 per committee:

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WEEK #	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
1	Rules & Operations @ 10 a.m. Study Session* @ 11 a.m. Community Development @ 1:30 p.m.	Health & Human Services @ 9:30 a.m. Study Session* @ 12 p.m. County Council @ 3 p.m.	
2	Rules & Operations @ 10 a.m. Study Session* @ 11 a.m. Public Safety @ 1:30 p.m.	Economic & Infrastructure Development @ 9:30 a.m. Study Session* @ 12 p.m. County Council @ 3 p.m.	Select Committee on Homelessness @ 1:30 p.m.
3	Rules & Operations @ 10 a.m. Study Session* @ 11 a.m. Community Development @ 1:30 p.m.	Health & Human Services @ 9:30 a.m. Study Session* @ 12 p.m. County Council @ 3 p.m.	
4	Rules & Operations @ 10 a.m. Study Session* @ 11 a.m. Public Safety @ 1:30 p.m.	Economic & Infrastructure Development @ 9:30 a.m. Study Session* @ 12 p.m. County Council @ 3 p.m.	Select Committee on Homelessness @ 1:30 p.m.
5*	Rules & Operations @ 10 a.m. Study Session* @ 11 a.m.	Study Session* @ 12 p.m. County Council @ 3 p.m.	
+ In addition to or in replace of regular meetings, one evening meeting per year in each council district.			

**San Juan County (Charter) 3 Council Members**[\(back to top\)](#)

A regular meeting schedule was not posted on the website. Looking at past agendas, meetings appear to be held during the day.

WEEK #	MONDAY	TUESDAY
1	Per County Code:	Per County Code:
2	Regular council/staff work sessions, workshops, staff	Regular Tuesday meetings of the council shall
3	meetings, or study sessions will be held on the Monday	be held on at least two Tuesdays of the month
4	preceding the regular Tuesday meeting, or at such	unless otherwise held or cancelled by action of
5*	times as are scheduled by the council,	the council.

**Snohomish County (Charter) 5 Council Members, 5 per committee**[\(back to top\)](#)

WEEK #	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
1	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m.(administrative session) Public Infrastructure and Conservation @ 10:00 a.m. Planning & Community Development @ 11:00 a.m.	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m. (general legislative session) Regular Council Meeting @ 10:30 (as needed) (Public Hearings)
2	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m.(administrative session) Finance, Budget and Administration @ 10:00 a.m. Health and Community Services @ 11:00 a.m. Community Safety and Justice @ 1:00 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m. (general legislative session) Regular Council Meeting @ 10:30 (as needed) (Public Hearings)
3	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m.(administrative session) Public Infrastructure and Conservation @ 10:00 a.m. Planning & Community Development @ 11:00 a.m.	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m. (general legislative session) Regular Council Meeting @ 10:30 (as needed) (Public Hearings)
4	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m.(administrative session) Finance, Budget and Administration @ 10:00 a.m. Health and Community Services @ 11:00 a.m. Community Safety and Justice @ 1:00 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m. (general legislative session) Regular Council Meeting @ 10:30 (as needed) (Public Hearings)
5*	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m.(administrative session)	Regular Council Meeting @ 9 a.m. (general legislative session)
+ One evening meeting per year in each council district. + a public hearing must be held in the evening on the proposed budget presented by the county executive and on any proposed ordinance to adopt, amend, or repeal a county comprehensive plan. + Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled as needed. + Council may for its own ad hoc committees as needed		

**Spokane County (Commissioners) 5 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

WEEK #	MONDAY	TUESDAY
1	Strategic Planning Meetings @ 9:00 a.m.	Board Briefing Meetings @ 9 a.m. Regular County Council @ 2 p.m.
2	Strategic Planning Meetings @ 9:00 a.m.	Board Briefing Meetings @ 9 a.m. Regular County Council @ 2 p.m.
3	Strategic Planning Meetings @ 9:00 a.m.	Board Briefing Meetings @ 9 a.m. Regular County Council @ 2 p.m.
4	Strategic Planning Meetings @ 9:00 a.m.	Board Briefing Meetings @ 9 a.m. Regular County Council @ 2 p.m.
5*	Strategic Planning Meetings @ 9:00 a.m.	Board Briefing Meetings @ 9 a.m. Regular County Council @ 2 p.m.
+The Board may hold working sessions each working day as needed. Meetings are open and agendas posted		

\* Study sessions provide the Council opportunities to study issues, gather and analyze information, and clarify problems. No official legislative actions are taken during Study Sessions and the meetings are open to public attendance.

**Benton County (Commissioners) 3 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

TUESDAY
Commissioner Meetings @ 9 a.m.
Commissioner Meetings @ 9 a.m.
Commissioner Meetings @ 9 a.m.
Commissioner Meetings @ 9 a.m.
Commissioner Meetings @ 9 a.m.

**Clallam County (Charter + Commissioners) 3 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

MONDAY	TUESDAY
Commissioner Work Sessions @ 9 a.m.	Commissioner Meetings @ 10 a.m.
Commissioner Work Sessions @ 9 a.m.	Commissioner Meetings @ 10 a.m.
Commissioner Work Sessions @ 9 a.m.	Commissioner Meetings @ 10 a.m.
Commissioner Work Sessions @ 9 a.m.	Commissioner Meetings @ 10 a.m.
Commissioner Work Sessions @ 9 a.m.	Commissioner Meetings @ 10 a.m.

**Clark County (Charter/Council + County Manager) 5 Council Members:**[\(back to top\)](#)

TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Council Meetings @ 10 a.m.	Board of Health or other work sessions as needed@8:30 or 9 a.m. Council Time @ 1 p.m.
Council Meetings, if needed @ 1 p.m.	Board of Health or other work sessions as needed@8:30 or 9 a.m. Council Time @ 1 p.m.
Council Meetings @ 6 p.m.	Board of Health or other work sessions as needed@8:30 or 9 a.m. Council Time @ 1 p.m.
Council Meetings @ 10 a.m.	Board of Health or other work sessions as needed@8:30 or 9 a.m. Council Time @ 1 p.m.
	Board of Health or other work sessions as needed@8:30 or 9 a.m. Council Time @ 1 p.m.

**Kitsap County (Board of Commissioners) 3 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

MONDAY	TUE:	WEDNESDAY
Briefing meeting @ 9 a.m. & 2 p.m.		Work study sessions @ 9 a.m.
Briefing meeting @ 9 a.m. & 2 p.m. Reg. Board of Commissioners @ 5:30 p.m.		Work study sessions @ 9 a.m.
Briefing meeting @ 9 a.m. & 2 p.m.		Work study sessions @ 9 a.m.
Briefing meeting @ 9 a.m. & 2 p.m. Reg. Board of Commissioners @ 5:30 p.m.		Work study sessions @ 9 a.m.
		Work study sessions @ 9 a.m.

**Skagit County (Board of Commissioners) 3 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

MONDAY - FRIDAY
The Skagit County Commissioners set one agenda for the entire week. Regular meetings are generally held all day on Mondays and Tuesdays (except the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month).
Wednesday – Friday meetings are generally various work sessions, briefings, executive sessions, joint meetings with other jurisdictions, and meetings with a variety of boards, commissions, and committees

**Thurston County (Board of Commissioners) 5 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

MONDAY	TUE:	WEDNESDAYS
Work session @ 10-12 Commissioners' check-in, decisions needed, and commissioner items @ 2-4:30 p.m.	Agenda setting @ 9-12 BoCC Regular Meeting and public hearing(s) 2-5 p.m.	Work Sessions as needed
Work session @ 10-12 Commissioners' check-in, decisions needed, and commissioner items @ 2-4:30 p.m.	9-11 Agenda Setting 11-12 Mtg. w/ Directors 1-3 Mtg. w/Electeds 3:45-5:30 BOH & Public Hearings	<b>THURSDAYS &amp; FRIDAYS</b>  Boards/Commissions, Individual Meetings, External Appts, & Constituent Meetings
Work session @ 10-12 Commissioners' check-in, decisions needed, and commissioner items @ 2-4:30 p.m.	Agenda setting @ 9-12 BoCC Regular Meeting and public hearing(s) 2-5 p.m.	
Work session @ 10-12 Commissioners' check-in, decisions needed, and commissioner items @ 2-4:30 p.m.	9-10:30 Agenda Setting 10:30-4:30 Commission Planning Session	

**Yakima County (Board of Commissioners) 3 Commissioners**[\(back to top\)](#)

MONDAY	TUE:	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Work session @ 9 a.m.	Regular BoCC Mtgs @ 10 a.m.		Work Session @ 1:30 p.m.
Work session @ 9 a.m.	Regular BoCC Mtgs @ 10 a.m.		Work Session @ 1:30 p.m.
Work session @ 9 a.m.	Regular BoCC Mtgs @ 10 a.m.		Work Session @ 1:30 p.m.
Work session @ 9 a.m.	Regular BoCC Mtgs @ 10 a.m.		Work Session @ 1:30 p.m.
Work session @ 9 a.m.	Regular BoCC Mtgs @ 10 a.m.	Board of Health @ 8:30 a.m.	Work Session @ 1:30 p.m.