

**Whatcom County
Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee**

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

9:35 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 10:55 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON,
SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil,
OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA REVISION 2.9.2026

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 9:51 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Scanlon stated that Consent Agenda item number 11 was withdrawn from the agenda so they would be considering items 1-10 and 12-13.

Galloway moved to recommend approval of Consent Agenda item numbers 1-10, and 12-13.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Elenbaas stated he would like to vote on Consent Agenda item numbers 8, 12, and 13 separately.

Stremler asked questions on Consent Agenda number 6.

Consent Agenda #6 (AB2026-117)

Champ Thomaskutty, Health and Community Services Director, answered whether the Health Department is there to connect with people who come to participate in a needle exchange, and stated yes, that is the goal. He answered if they track how many people participate in the needle exchange program, how many are offered help, and how many respond and follow through, and stated they track the engagements but not necessarily who followed through.

Malora Christensen, Health and Community Services, stated since the program is co-located with the Way Station it allows people to connect to other services.

Stremler stated he would like to vote on item number 6 separately.

Councilmembers voted on the Consent Agenda item numbers 1-5, 7, 9, and 10 (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2026-060](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management to utilize State Homeland Security Grant Program funding to sustain and enhance Division of Emergency Management programs, in the amount of \$47,479

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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

2. [AB2026-068](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham for Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park Infrastructure Improvements, in the amount of \$3,000,000

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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

3. [AB2026-069](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham for the What-Comm Communications Center in support of reimbursement for 911 capital equipment expenses in the amount of \$94,107

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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

4. [AB2026-092](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham to affirm and jointly agree to the terms of financial support for the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission in 2026, including a financial commitment by the County in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 and a financial commitment by the City in an amount not to exceed \$100,000

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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. [AB2026-116](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation to obligate federal Ferry Boat Program funds for the Lummi Island Ferry operating costs, in the amount of \$1,920,916 for a total amended contract amount of \$3,596,616

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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 Stremmler

Nay: 0

6. [AB2026-117](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Health to provide funding for various public health services in the amount of \$166,766, for a total amended agreement amount of \$11,128,322

This item was considered separately below.

7. [AB2026-122](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization to recognize and allocate revenue to Whatcom County for its participation in the North Sound Integrated Care Network, in the amount of \$725,761.41

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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 Stremmler

Nay: 0

8. [AB2026-123](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an agreement between Whatcom County and Whatcom Land Trust to provide pass-through grant funding from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office for the purchase of Phase 1 of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest, in the amount of \$665,402

This item was considered separately below.

9. [AB2026-127](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Washington Initiative for Supported Employment to provide developmental disabilities-related training and technical assistance services in

the amount of \$20,000, for a total amended contract amount of \$59,500

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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. [AB2026-133](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and King Architecture, PLLC for additional design and electrical engineering services for the Van Zandt Community Hall renovation, in the amount of \$13,540 for a total amended contract amount of \$132,394

Galloway moved and Buchanan 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

11. [AB2026-137](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a Collective Bargaining Agreement between Whatcom County and Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 for the period January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2028

This agenda item was WITHDRAWN.

12. [AB2026-142](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a purchase agreement between Whatcom County and Western Washington University for the purchase of property located at 333 32nd Street, Bellingham WA (Tax Parcel No. 370306340528), in the amount of \$8,056,584

This item was considered separately below.

13. [AB2026-147](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a lease agreement between Whatcom County and Western Washington University (WWU) for WWU's use of the facility located at 333 32nd Street, Bellingham WA for two years, revenue amount of \$174,878

This item was considered separately below.

Council "Consent Agenda" Items Considered Separately

6. [AB2026-117](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Health to provide funding for various public health services in the amount of \$166,766, for a

total amended agreement amount of \$11,128,322

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Councilmembers discussed the motion, ethical challenges with helping someone use drugs safely, that these are evidence-based and proven methods, and that it is an opportunity for health services to make a connection in the absence of the ability to do other things.

Galloway's motion that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 1 - Stremler

8. [AB2026-123](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an agreement between Whatcom County and Whatcom Land Trust to provide pass-through grant funding from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office for the purchase of Phase 1 of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest, in the amount of \$665,402

Galloway moved and Buchanan seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Elenbaas and Stremler spoke about their concerns, general opposition to the entire project, that maybe there is a better use for money in our county (such as flooding issues), and that managing a property like this does not seem like a fundamental role of Whatcom County.

Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department, spoke about the purchase of Phase 1 in 2022 and stated the purchase of that property is mostly for preservation and not for actual ongoing logging, although that has not completely been determined yet. He spoke about the funding for the property and stated this is the agreement that passes the money to the Whatcom Land Trust through the County, and the Council will have a role in a governance board which will be established for both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Galloway's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremler

12. [AB2026-142](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a purchase agreement between Whatcom County and Western Washington University for the purchase of property located at 333 32nd Street, Bellingham WA (Tax Parcel No.

370306340528), in the amount of \$8,056,584

Galloway moved and Scanlon seconded that the Contract be
RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Elenbaas stated this building should not be a viable option to house the Planning and Development Services Department since it is not near any of the people or parcels or projects that it is serving, and that projects should not all be done online, so this is just another thing that does not take into consideration the public service aspect of what the County is doing.

Galloway stated she believes the pros of this decision far outweigh the cons and she spoke about those.

Stremmer stated he has received some pushback from the public on the location.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, answered how many in-person visits are happening at the NW Annex site, and stated a couple of dozen a week, but many permit applicants are using the web portal. He answered if there are any mitigation efforts being looked at to offload the weight this would put on people who would have to make a longer trip to go in person. He spoke about alternative ways for people to communicate with Planning staff, including phone calls, emails, and Zoom meetings.

Elenbaas stated he thinks most people would prefer to have a choice of how they interact with Planning, and he thinks there are other options for a location than just this building.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, spoke about immediate needs they would need to invest in the NW Annex building if this building is not approved and that they need to weigh those considerations. She stated, though Planning would be the first occupant in the new building, this would be a key strategy in freeing up space in the courthouse to speed up the criminal justice process.

**Galloway's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR
AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremmer

13. [AB2026-147](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a lease agreement

between Whatcom County and Western Washington University (WWU) for WWU's use of the facility located at 333 32nd Street, Bellingham WA for two years, revenue amount of \$174,878

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION.

Elenbaas stated he is not going to support it and thinks that the rent is too cheap.

Rob Ney, Administrative Services Department Facilities, stated when they were introduced to this property it was for rent by commercial real estate brokers at this rate, so in the negotiation process, the County said they could just adopt that rent.

Galloway's motion that the Agreement be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremmler

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-135](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the project budget for the Courthouse Building Envelope Fund, request no. 7

Scanlon stated all the discussion items are associated with ordinances on tonight's agenda for introduction.

Rob Ney, Administrative Services Department Facilities, spoke about the total cumulative cost of the project over the last five or six years and he answered questions. He stated they should finish this project around 2029 and then will have to start some of that maintenance again to keep it going. They are trying to keep it on track so they need to spend less each year.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

2. [AB2026-144](#) Discussion of an ordinance establishing the Ferndale Senior Activity Center Improvements Fund and establishing an initial budget for the Ferndale Senior Activity Center Improvements Fund

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, answered a question about the relationship that the County has with this senior center in comparison to the others, and stated there are differences among the different centers. Ferndale is unique in that the City of Ferndale owns the grounds but the County is responsible for the maintenance of the building. He answered when the workgroup is set to come to a conclusion, and stated

the workgroup, which is a group of representatives from different agencies and cities formed to examine the structure that we have in place for senior centers in the community and make recommendations, will be done in July.

Elenbaas spoke about his appreciation for the services the senior centers provide.

Stremmer stated he wants to make sure all the centers have the same opportunities.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

3. [AB2026-146](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 4, in the amount of \$1,804,963

Scanlon stated there is a substitute summary in the packet for the ordinance.

Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director, briefed the councilmembers on the substitute summary and the budget request. He stated the substitute summary includes updated budgeted expenditures for 2026 based on approved continuing appropriations from 2025. He stated, with the latest Charter amendments, there was a new amendment that was presented related to Charter section 6.41 (financial reporting). It imposed a six-week (after the end of a quarter) deadline for providing Council with a quarterly report. That works for most of the quarters, but the year-end report has never hit that deadline. The Charter amendment says that if Finance does not have that report to them by the due date (which is today), no supplemental budget appropriations (with a few exceptions) may be approved by the Council. They are looking into those exceptions and it will not affect any of today's budget actions, but it may affect some that are brought at the next Council meeting. He stated he will be working with the Prosecuting Attorney on that to get some clarity on what it means and whether they will be bringing some recommended amendments to the ordinance before it is passed at the next meeting. He stated that in the last four years or so, the year-end quarterly reports have been issued about mid- to late April and he does not know if this Charter amendment considered that.

Scanlon stated this is a new requirement and they will need to see how it works this year then discuss potential options.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

4. [AB2026-148](#) Discussion of an ordinance establishing the project budget for the Strawberry Point/Lake Whatcom Boulevard stormwater improvements, request no. 1

There were no questions on this ordinance.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-094](#) Ordinance closing the Northwest Annex Redevelopment Fund

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

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon
Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremler

2. [AB2026-098](#) Ordinance amending the project budget for the Hovander Park Building Improvements Project, request no. 4

Buchanan moved and Galloway 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

3. [AB2026-104](#) Ordinance establishing the 32nd Street Property Acquisition Fund and establishing an initial budget for the 32nd Street Property Acquisition Fund

Scanlon stated there is a substitute ordinance.

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

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon
Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremler

4. [AB2026-100](#) Ordinance establishing the Glacier Restroom Improvements Fund and establishing an initial budget for the Glacier Restroom Improvements Fund

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

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, answered if bathrooms in Birch Bay are also in the plan and stated they were.

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

5. [AB2026-102](#) Ordinance amending the project budget for the New Public Health, Safety and Justice Facility, request no. 10

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

Elenbaas stated he would like to see exactly what they are building first and what the plan is before voting yes on this money.

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

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 1 - Elenbaas

6. [AB2026-110](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 3, in the amount of \$7,123,065

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

Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department, answered if the money for Stewart Mountain is in this item, and stated that is correct.

Scanlon asked if the items in this budget ordinance are under a different quarterly report deadline than the budget request number four (**AB2026-146** which will be dependent on the year-end report for 2025).

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated everything listed here in terms of committee discussion and recommendation to Council is OK to proceed. It is items for introduction for which the deadline could create an issue.

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

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremler

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger