

RESOLUTION 2021- _____

**TO REVIEW AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
WHATCOM COUNTY**

WHEREAS, A 2016 report by the County Council's Legislative Analyst found that Whatcom County has over 40 active boards, committees and commissions; and

WHEREAS, over 300 Whatcom County residents volunteer their time on boards and committees that advise the County Executive and County Council; and,

WHEREAS, the 2016 report determined that for most committees, it is difficult to recruit members; and,

WHEREAS, these boards and committees should provide a forum for residents to interact with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,

WHEREAS, County Council meetings should provide a forum for residents to interact with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,

WHEREAS; the Whatcom County Council and Executive rely on these boards and committees for advice on policy; and,

WHEREAS, it may be difficult for some members of the public to be aware of matters that come before the boards, committees and commissions, and matters that the Planning Commission and County Council address; and,

WHEREAS, online meetings associated with COVID pandemic and have altered how people interact with their government and present opportunities to rethink how the public may engage with government; and,

WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of recruiting people to volunteer for boards and committees;

WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of notifying the public about the business of their government; and,

WHEREAS, there are many potential ways that commissions, boards, and Council can be assisted by Council and Executive staff in order to increase public participation; and,

WHEREAS, there is a wealth of talent in the public and among County staff to advise on how to enhance public participation in meetings of boards, committees, commissions, and Council meetings; and,

WHEREAS, the County Executive has expressed a willingness to helping to identify staff who can help advise on these matters;

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council will work
2 with the County Executive to address the issue of public participation in our local
3 government and support recommendations for improvements; and,
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5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Chair of the Council and the County Executive
6 may identify staff and citizens to form an ad-hoc group of limited duration; and,

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this group may survey members of all the County
8 boards, committees, and commissions regarding public participation in their meetings; and,

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the group may make recommendations to the
10 Council on the following and related issues:

- 11 1. Effectiveness of traditional methods of "notice" in light of the changing ways
12 individual's access news and information.
- 13 2. Needs and opportunities for public education on the issues addressed by local
14 government so that citizens can be more effective in their participation.
- 15 3. The use of remote meeting technologies to increase ease of participation beyond the
16 current public health crisis.
- 17 4. The mechanics of navigating and accessing policy and legislation on the county
18 website.
- 19 5. The public comment process and accessibility.
- 20 6. Evaluation of all public participation processes and procedures through an equity
21 lens.

22 **ADOPTED** this _____ day of _____, 2021.

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27 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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31 _____
32 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

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32 Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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34 **APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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36 _____
37 Civil Deputy Prosecutor