

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Capital Facility
Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

FINDINGS OF FACT AND REASONS FOR ACTION

Background Information

1. The proposal is to amend the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan as follows:
 - a. Adopting the new Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan).
 - b. Repealing the existing Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities 2019-2024.
2. Notice of the subject amendments was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on August 21, 2020.
3. A determination of non-significance (DNS) was issued under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) on August 28, 2020.
4. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing for the subject amendments was published in the Bellingham Herald on September 11, 2020.
5. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was posted on the County website on September 14, 2020.
6. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was sent to citizen, media, cities and other groups on the County's e-mail list on September 14, 2020.
7. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the subject amendments on September 24, 2020.

8. Pursuant to WCC 22.10.060(1), in order to approve the proposed comprehensive plan amendments the County must find all of the following:
 - a. The amendment conforms to the requirements of the Growth Management Act, is internally consistent with the county-wide planning policies and is consistent with any interlocal planning agreements.
 - b. Further studies made or accepted by the Department of Planning and Development Services indicate changed conditions that show need for the amendment.
 - c. The public interest will be served by approving the amendment. In determining whether the public interest will be served, factors including but not limited to the following shall be considered:
 - i. The anticipated effect upon the rate or distribution of population growth, employment growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the comprehensive plan.
 - ii. The anticipated effect on the ability of the county and/or other service providers, such as cities, schools, water and/or sewer purveyors, fire districts, and others as applicable, to provide adequate services and public facilities including transportation facilities.
 - iii. Anticipated impact upon designated agricultural, forest and mineral resource lands.
 - d. The amendment does not include or facilitate spot zoning.

Growth Management Act

9. The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes planning goals in RCW 36.70A.020 to guide adoption of comprehensive plan amendments.
10. GMA planning goal # 12 is to “Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards” (RCW 36.70A.020(12)).

11. The subject amendments include updating the Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities for the 2021-2026 planning period. Updating the CIP is one step in the process of planning regional facilities provided by the County to serve the people of Whatcom County.
12. The GMA, at RCW 36.70A.070(3), requires that a comprehensive plan must include a capital facilities plan element consisting of:
 - a. An inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities.
 - b. A forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities.
 - c. The proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities.
 - d. At least a six-year plan that will finance such capital facilities within projected funding capacities and clearly identifies sources of public money for such purposes.
 - e. A requirement to reassess the land use element if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent.
13. The Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities contains an inventory of existing facilities, a forecast of future needs based upon the level of service standards adopted in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and/or other relevant factors, proposed renovated, expanded or new capital facilities, costs and funding sources.
14. Existing Comprehensive Plan Policy 4A-4 addresses the GMA requirement to reassess the land use element if probable capital facility funding falls short.

County-Wide Planning Policies

15. County-Wide Planning Policy K-1 indicates that, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the County must identify appropriate land for public facilities that meets the needs of the community including recreation, transportation and human service facilities.
16. The Six-Year CIP identifies County park, trail, transportation and other improvements as contemplated by the County Wide Planning Policies.

Interlocal Agreements

17. Existing interlocal agreements between Whatcom County and the cities indicate that the County will consult with the appropriate city in planning new road construction projects within the city's urban growth area. The interlocal agreements also address joint planning for parks.
18. The County Engineer confirmed on August 31, 2020 that the County sends a copy of the six-year transportation improvement program to cities prior to approval, requests comments, and informs cities of the hearing date. The Whatcom County Parks Director confirmed on September 10, 2020 that the County Parks' staff maintains a consistent working relationship with appropriate staff from cities on joint park projects and planning. Therefore, the type of cooperation envisioned by the interlocal agreements is occurring.

Further Studies/Changed Conditions

19. The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan calls for an update of the Six-Year CIP for County facilities every other year. Specifically, Policy 4B-1 is to:

Maintain and update, on at least a biennial basis, a six-year capital improvement program (CIP) that identifies projects, outlines a schedule, and designates realistic funding sources for all county capital projects based on a review of population and revenue conditions existing at that time.
20. A revised CIP has been formulated for County owned or operated facilities, which presents improvement projects over the new six-year planning period.

Public Interest

21. The Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 is based upon anticipated population growth over the six-year planning period and other relevant factors. Therefore, the proposal should complement the County's growth and development plans.
22. The Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities will have a positive impact on the County's ability to provide public facilities by planning ahead for such facilities.

23. The goal of the Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities is to plan for County owned or operated parks, trails, activity centers, maintenance & operations, general government buildings and sites, Sheriff's Office, emergency management, adult corrections, juvenile detention, transportation, and stormwater facilities to serve the people of Whatcom County. Planning for such County facilities is in the public interest.

Spot Zoning

24. The subject proposal does not involve rezoning property.

Funding Sources and Budgeting

25. The Planning Commission recommends that the County Council carefully consider sources of funding and budgetary restraints.

CONCLUSION

The subject Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan amendments are consistent with the approval criteria in WCC 22.10.060.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the above findings and conclusions, the Planning Commission recommends:

1. Approval of Exhibit A, the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan).
2. Repealing Exhibit B, the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2019-2024.

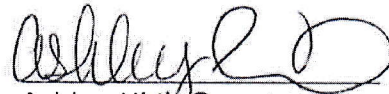
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION



Kelvin Barton, Chair

09-25-2020

Date



Ashley Ubil, Secretary

09/24/2020

Date

Commissioners voted to recommend approval of the Findings of Fact & Reasons for Action, approval of Exhibit A, and repeal of Exhibit B on September 24, 2020 (vote was 5-3 with 1 member absent). Members present at the meeting when the vote was taken: Robert Bartel, Kelvin Barton, Atul Deshmane, Jim Hansen, Stephen Jackson, Jon Maberry, Natalie McClendon, and Dominic Mocerri.