

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**  
County Courthouse  
311 Grand Ave. Suite #108  
Bellingham, WA 98225



**Satpal Singh Sidhu**  
County Executive

**MEMO:**

**TO:** Whatcom County Council  
**FROM:** Jed Holmes, Public Affairs Manager  
**THROUGH:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
**DATE:** August 27, 2024  
**RE:** **Government Affairs Contract with Gordon Thomas Honeywell**

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For more than a decade, the City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham and Whatcom County were part of a three-party agreement to contract with McBride Public Affairs for lobbying services in Olympia. Earlier this year, after consultations between the Port, City and County Administration, a decision was made to discontinue the three-party arrangement and seek separate representation for our outreach efforts with the state legislature and state agencies in Olympia.

This decision to begin a new approach in our lobbying efforts comes as Whatcom County sees a need for more intensive and extensive engagement with the State Legislature and State agencies as we face both funding and policy challenges (housing, behavioral health, public defense, new ferry, food security, etc.). Having our own lobbyist will allow us to receive a higher level of service, albeit at a higher cost than the previous arrangement.

In June, Council granted additional budget authority to contract with a new lobbyist and the Administration published a Request for Proposals for a government affairs consultant. We received four proposals and, following an initial review, invited three firms to participate in interviews.

The evaluation panel included representatives of the Executive's Office, Public Works, Superior Court, and Health & Community Services. (Additionally, Councilmember Galloway participated in a review of the written proposals but was unable to attend the interviews.) The panel's consensus was to move forward with Gordon Thomas Honeywell.

The contract presented for your approval has an extensive scope of work and will help the Administration, in collaboration with Council, advocate for our common interests in Olympia. The annual cost is \$86,040, which is approximately 80% more than the County's contribution to the previous contract with McBride Public Affairs, where Whatcom County was one of three parties served.

Josh Weiss, who has been tabbed to serve as the county's primary state lobbyist per this contract, will be visiting Whatcom County on Monday, September 9, to meet with councilmembers and discuss our future lobbying efforts.

Please send questions related to this contract to Jed Holmes ([jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us)).