

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

1 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

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**Roll Call**

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

Announcements**Committee Discussion**

1. [AB2026-037](#) Update on 2026 State Legislative Session
DISCUSSED
2. [AB2026-218](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 6, Transportation
DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to continue review of chapter six (Transportation) using the preliminary Council draft for March 24th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the chart of proposed Council changes dated for March 24th, 2026.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend amendment number 28 in the “Chapter 6 - Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 3.24.2026,” (which is policy 6F-3 on page 6-14) to change Coast Millennium Trail to Salish Coast Trail.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to request staff prepare the Chapter 6 - Preliminary Council Draft as amended on March 24, 2026 for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council Introduction and public hearing.

3. [AB2026-216](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 4, Capital Facilities
DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to continue review of Chapter 4 (Capital Facilities) using the preliminary Council draft for March 24th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the chart of proposed Council changes dated March 24th, 2026.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend the new Policy 4M-7 (of Chapter 4) to strike “low impact rural residential,” insert “public facilities,” add the word “existing” before “public infrastructure,” but strike the word “public” there, so that the policy would read:

Explore opportunities to support alternative infrastructure models and off-grid and distributed renewable energy systems serving public facilities development, where such systems reduce reliance on existing infrastructure and advance the County's climate resilience goals.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to request staff prepare the Chapter 4 (Capital Facilities) preliminary Council draft as amended March 24th, 2026 for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

4. [AB2026-217](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5, Utilities

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to continue review of Chapter 5 (Utilities) using the preliminary Council draft for March 24th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed in motions passed by Council members as listed in the chart of proposed Council changes dated March 24th, 2026.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend new Policy 5H-3 to add language at the end of the policy after "tidal energy" that says "when the County has permitting responsibilities."

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend policies 5H-3 and 5H-4 so that wherever Councilmember Galloway used the word “fusion,” they substitute that with "nuclear" throughout the document, to add “low-carbon or” to Policy 5H-4 so that it starts with “Encourage and support the development of low-carbon or renewable energy projects...,” and to add the word “or” to 5H-2 after “low-carbon” so that both policies (5H-4 and 5H-2) say “low-carbon or renewable energy...” All three policies would read:

Policy 5H-2: Explore emerging low-carbon or renewable energy technologies, and when applicable, update Whatcom County Code as needed to support renewable energy production, generation, transmission, and distribution.

Policy 5H-3: Whatcom County should engage and coordinate with Tribal treaty rights holders and other impacted communities before recommending resource, land, or water-intensive energy projects such as hydroelectricity, nuclear, and tidal energy when the County has permitting responsibilities.

Policy 5H-4: Encourage and support the development of low-carbon or renewable energy projects and technologies, such as anaerobic digesters, solar, battery energy storage systems, wind energy, geothermal, nuclear, wave, tidal, and green hydrogen where applicable

5. [AB2026-231](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 7, Economic Development

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to continue review of Chapter 7 using the preliminary Council draft for March 24th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 25th and additional edits proposed and motions passed by Council members as listed in the chart of proposed Council changes dated March 24th, 2026.

MOTION 2

Motion approved to amend the amendment #24 in the "Chapter 7 - Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 3.24.2026" (Policy 7B-8) so that it reads:

Preserving farmland alone is not sufficient to sustain Whatcom County's agricultural economy. County policy should strive for agricultural lands to remain not only physically preserved but also economically productive, while acknowledging that access to water is necessary for agriculture to remain the highest and best use of designated Agricultural Lands.

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend Policy 7-10 (item #26) so that it reads:

A viable agricultural economy cannot exist without reliable access to water. The County should support efficient agricultural water use in land-use, resource management, and economic planning. Water management policies should explicitly support ongoing and future agricultural operations as a critical component of Whatcom County's economy.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to amend Policy 7C-12 (7C-13) as noted in amendment #35 in the chart so that it reads.

Recognize that access to available and affordable child care supports workforce participation and economic vitality in Whatcom County. Support local efforts to expand the availability of affordable, quality child care as part of workforce development. Consider the recommendations of the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force relating to child care issues.

MOTION 5

Motion approved to amend paragraph 4 of the Issues Goals and Policies section to include clarification by removing the words "our programs" and replacing them with "our local educational institution's programs" so that the paragraph reads:

Traditionally, as skilled professionals advance in their careers, some choose to establish startup enterprises, with a portion achieving success as living-wage employers for future generations. Similarly, certain graduates from local educational institutions' programs go on to serve as educational mentors, instructors, or venture capital investors.

6. [AB2026-249](#) Discussion regarding schedule for Council review of the comprehensive plan update

DISCUSSED

Items Added by Revision

Other Business

Adjournment