

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

3:20 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 3:50 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA
REVISION 7.13.2026 (START/END TIMES REVISED)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Elizabeth Boyle
Barry Buchanan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jessica Rienstra
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.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

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-431](#) Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Chapter 5.20, Fireworks, to strengthen fireworks regulations by limiting the days fireworks are allowed and prohibiting fireworks during burn bans

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

AB2026-431 and AB2026-475 were discussed together under AB2026-475

2. [AB2026-475](#) Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Chapter 5.20, Fireworks, to strengthen fireworks regulations by limiting the days fireworks are allowed and prohibiting fireworks during burn bans

Galloway stated since both **AB2026-431** and **AB2026-475** are related, she is going to read both of them into the record and they can have one combined discussion. Both versions had a public hearing and were referred to committee, but she has not had time to get answers to all the questions so she is looking for high-level discussion and direction from Council for the next phase of this work. An ordinance could then maybe be brought back later this year with that advice incorporated. She would also like to get an indication of which version of the ordinance they should move forward with.

Councilmembers discussed hearing community support for having limits or restrictions on fireworks during a stage 2 burn ban, if people would get on board with amending the days of use to July 3rd and 4th, getting a response from the tribes, interest in having a conversation with Birch Bay Community Advisory Committee and residents to hear what the impacts might be to Birch Bay, looking at what is actually working in other communities to reduce risks and concerns regarding fireworks, if there is an advisory committee that could study this, that the Sheriff's Guild said in an email that they are opting not to engage on this issue and provide an official stance and that they indicated concerns around enforcement capacity in a resource-constrained environment, getting the perspective of

emergency management, a preference to continue on with **AB2026-475** which notes the stage 2 burn ban, looking at ways to increase safety when fireworks do happen and creating safer spaces to engage in them, hearing from the public in a work session, that regulation may not help to alleviate the problem, the feeling that doing something is better than doing nothing, getting more feedback about what it might look like if they were to implement a ban with a stage 2 burn ban, how much we are potentially benefiting the Canadian economy by people going up there to avoid fireworks here, moving forward with the **AB2026-475** substitute version and hearing from Birch Bay how many feet a potential setback should be, how an ordinance would work without enforcement and if it would create more conflict, and finding a middle ground for the County's role in reducing risk.

Galloway stated she will work with Council staff to put together a "to-do" list and maybe provide a fresh draft.

Councilmembers discussed a timeline for getting all the feedback, that state law requires a year before it would take effect, and being mindful of providing certainty to firework sellers who sometimes buy their fireworks two years in advance.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

AB2026-431 and AB2026-475 were discussed together under AB2026-475

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger