

Whatcom County Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, July 8, 2025

9:55 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 10:45 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON,
SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil,
OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA REVISED 7.7.2025**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Barry Buchanan

Also Present: Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmler

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Buchanan *moved* to recommend approval of Consent Agenda items one through four.

Byrd stated he would ask about Consent Agenda item #4 (**AB2025-501**) before the evening meeting and how it works out that the contract says it requires the County to have a full-time officer yet we are only covering about half of the cost.

Councilmembers voted on the consent items (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2025-495](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal grant agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Commerce to provide funding for flood mitigation planning in Sumas, Nooksack, and Everson, in the amount of \$1,310,000 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

Buchanan moved that the Contract (FCZDBS) be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

2. [AB2025-497](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families for services related to programming for juvenile offenders under the supervision of Juvenile Court

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following

vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

3. [AB2025-500](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Administrative Office of the Courts for services related to the Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP), in the amount of \$112,500

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

4. [AB2025-501](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and US Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service to increase the contract amount by \$56,760

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-490](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the project budget for the Birch Bay-Lynden Road and Blaine Road Intersection Improvements Fund; CRP #906001, request no. 1

The following people briefed the councilmembers and answered questions.

- Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director
- Josh Cihak, Public Works Department

Cihak stated they are trying to increase the right-of-way funding so they can finish off the acquisition of the properties in order to construct the project.

Kosa spoke about whether there is any contribution from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on this project, and stated the answer is no. This is a county priority. But they have procured a Federal grant for 90 percent of the construction.

Cihak spoke about the funding.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

2. [AB2025-491](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the project budget for the E. Smith/Hannegan Road Intersection Improvements Fund, request no. 4

Josh Cihak, Public Works Department, briefed the councilmembers and stated this is putting funds back into the Road Fund. They are looking to decrease the project based budget.

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, stated this is one of the measures they previously discussed with councilmembers when they talked about cash flow issues with the Road Fund. They had said they would be coming to Council for ordinances to bring some of that funding back where they did not need to have it tied up. She answered questions about the round-a-bout.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

3. [AB2025-493](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the Lummi Island Ferry Replacement and System Modernization Fund and project-based budget, request no. 1

The following people spoke:

- Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director
- James Lee, Public Works Department

Kosa spoke about the CRAB grant which was awarded in the amount of \$10 million over a 20-year period. She stated we have received those funds and they go directly into the Road fund. However, they are restricted funds and can only be used for capital replacement. This ordinance sets the funds aside to make sure they are only spent for capital replacement.

Lee stated this ordinance will formally move the funds from the Road Fund into the Ferry Replacement Fund and it notes that all future disbursements will be deposited into the project fund. He spoke about the funding.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

4. [AB2025-499](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the project budget for the New Public Health, Safety and Justice Facility, request no. 8

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, briefed the councilmembers and stated this adds money to the new jail and behavioral care center project budget, which should hopefully get them through the first quarter of 2026.

She stated the majority of the funding here will go to funding the initial scope for the design builder contract, which is out for procurement right now. She referred to the Staff Memo (on file) which breaks down what the \$4 million is paying for. She answered how the contingency for consultants can be used and about expenses that have been billed to date. She stated the project budget amendment also budgets their projected 2025 revenue for the justice sales tax, and it transfers \$1 million of what was General Fund back into the County's Capital Facilities Reserve Fund and out of the justice project budget so it can be used for other county-only capital needs. She answered whether the project based budgets are being run through advisory committees and stated they are just providing quarterly financial reports. She answered questions about the estimated \$3.4 million for the design builder noted in the memo and spoke about the selection of a firm.

Rob Ney, Administrative Services Department Facilities, answered when they would be breaking ground and opening. He stated they will get their design builder on board, hopefully in August, and one of the first phases they will have with them is developing the schedule. Right now, they are still choosing July 4, 2028 until it is verified by the design builder. He stated between now and the end of 2026 they will be defining exactly what this jail looks like. He spoke about councilmember comments about using local businesses, and how the project might be broken up into phases which might allow for that.

Scanlon stated the supplemental request states on the last page that it is estimated that the Justice Facility will be operational in late 2028.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

5. [AB2025-503](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the Whatcom County Budget, request no. 8, in the amount of \$3,548,146

Scanlon asked about the request to fund Canyon Lake Community Forest access improvements (funding for the road and gates) and how it links into the letter they received from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in late June. When he saw the letter, he wondered if they were on track, but it seems with this budget request, that they *are* on track.

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, stated the supplemental is for an existing agreement the County has with Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI). As it relates to the DNR letter, they are going to be receiving a road use permit, which will give the department access to Canyon Lake for administrative purposes through 2026 and will allow them to implement the work required under the SPI easement. It also gives them

the ability to do other activities there from a maintenance perspective. He spoke about the DNR letter, and stated they are still in a negotiation phase with them and are evaluating what the best course of action should be to move forward. He answered questions about the goal for vehicle traffic access.

Stremmler stated he thinks it would be advantageous to hear from DNR to get their perspective.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, answered questions about the acceptance of the \$1 million (\$1,022,244 on the "Summary Listing" on file) that was previously in the Justice Project project-based budget and is being moved to the Capital Facilities Reserve Fund (discussed in **AB2025-499**). She pointed it out on the summary listing (at the bottom of the list).

Clerk's note: This item was discussed further under **AB2025-516** (the next agenda item) and then again under this agenda bill number (**AB2025-503**) after that.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

THIS ITEM WAS DISCUSSED IN AB2025-516 BELOW AND THEN AGAIN UNDER AB2025-503 AFTER THAT.

Items Added by Revision

1. [AB2025-516](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to award Bid #25-37 and enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Summit Construction Group, Inc., for renovations and additions to the Van Zandt Community Hall, in the amount of \$823,544

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, briefed the councilmembers and stated this will add capacity in the building and some extra storage space for the radio station that operates out of the Van Zandt Community Hall.

Buchanan stated he is so happy they are moving forward with this project, and Byrd stated it is a fantastic project, and that the radio station there is one of the few channels emergency operations has to get communications and information out to that area.

Stremmler asked more about **AB2025-503** and how to go about separating out a request from the ordinance, and the following people discussed the process with councilmembers:

- Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office
- Kimberly Thulin, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Then councilmembers continued to consider **AB2025-516** (this item).

**Byrd moved that the Bid Award be RECOMMENDED FOR
AUTHORIZATION. The motion carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

5. [AB2025-503](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the Whatcom County Budget, request no. 8, in the amount of \$3,548,146

Councilmembers discussed this item (from earlier in the agenda) further.

Stremmer spoke about request #5001 to fund Canyon Lake Community Forest access improvements, and stated he would maybe like it to be voted on separately tonight.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, stated that voting separately on one line item is not really an option but they can move to amend the ordinance to remove that line item. Ultimately, there needs to be one vote on the agenda bill.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger