

Recommendation for Lummi Island Engagement Plan

On August 9, 2023, Executive Sidhu exercised his power of veto per Whatcom County Charter 3.22(f) on Ordinance 2023-045 Amending Chapter 10.34 Ferry Rates, which had been approved by the Whatcom County Council on July 25, 2023, with a 5-2 vote. One of the objections provided was that the Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC) was unable to convene to allow for additional public input and provide a final recommendation to the County Executive and Council on the code changes proposed in the Ordinance.

It is important to acknowledge and take responsibility for the circumstances that exacerbated feelings of frustration and distrust between Lummi Island residents and Whatcom County government, and work together to remedy.

The intent of this memo is to propose an engagement plan that aims to:

1. clarify the roles and responsibilities of the County Council, Executive, Public Works staff, and the new LIFAC,
2. improve policy process,
3. ensure robust community engagement, and
4. restore trust between Lummi Island residents and Whatcom County government.

While outcomes cannot be guaranteed, the County can commit to giving additional time to improve the process including provide opportunity for additional community input, address remaining issues, and consider a final recommendation from LIFAC in hopes of restoring trust in relationships and effecting a better outcome. This memo outlines desired objectives and a proposed timeline to provide transparency of what this engagement process could look like.

DESIRED OBJECTIVES:

1. Public Works staff, Executive's Office, and designated Councilmember(s) to meet with Lummi Island residents to discuss proposed ordinance revisions sent in June.
2. Council to amend WCC 2.145, Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee
3. Council to appoint members to the new LIFAC
4. Executive and Council to allow time and provide resource to support the new LIFAC in the following activities:
 - a. Review WCC 10.34 Ferry Rates and necessary background information from Public Works.
 - b. Facilitate public input and work with members of the public to process feedback. Host at least one public engagement opportunity such as public comment in a committee meeting or a town hall event.
 - c. Ask questions and receive answers from Public Works.
 - d. Provide a written summary of remaining issues / desired amendments and work through them with Public Works staff.

- e. Provide a final recommendation to the Executive and Council by the end of the year with a presentation to Council in the first meeting of 2024.

The Administration and Council may consider engaging a third-party facilitator to ensure the public process is conducted in a timely, civil, and productive manner.

PROPOSED TIMELINE:

September 5, 2023 – Special Council Meeting to discuss Executive Sidhu’s veto of Ordinance 2023-045 Amending Chapter 10.34 Ferry Rates and next steps.

September 12, 2023 – Council Public Works & Health Committee policy discussion on Amending WCC 2.145, Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee. Introduction of Ordinance amending WCC 2.145, Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee.

September 26, 2023 – Council action on Ordinance amending WCC 2.145, Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee. Announces vacancies and that applications are due October 17th at 10am.

October 10, 2023 – Council introduces receipt of applications for vacancies.

October 24, 2023 – Council appoints members to fill vacancies.

November 8, 2023 – First meeting of new LIFAC.

December 31, 2023 – Deadline to submit LIFAC recommendation to Executive and Council.

January 9, 2024 – LIFAC Chair presents to Council. Administration offers new Ordinance Amending Chapter 10.34 Ferry Rates for introduction.

January 23, 2024 – Public Hearing and potential Council action on new Ordinance Amending Chapter 10.34 Ferry Rates.

February 6, 2024 – Introduction of new Ferry rate schedule.

February 20, 2024 – Public Hearing and potential action on new Ferry rate schedule.

April 2024 – New rates go into effect 60 days after new Ferry rate schedule is approved.