

**Whatcom County
Council Special Committee of the Whole**

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

9 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 9:55 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360-778-5010)

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Vice Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements**Committee Discussion**

1. [AB2025-707](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 1, in the amount of \$20,970,606

Deputy Executive Aly Pennucci shared a memo (on file) following up on various items from the Executive's recommendations for the mid-biennium budget, including how many vacant positions exist across county departments.

Donovan asked about the movement of funds from the Community Priorities Fund. He stated that he may have interest in using some of those funds to support the food bank, and he has questions about how a potential lease for a new Sheriff's Office will impact the budget.

Deputy Executive Kayla Schott-Bresler stated that food banks are an eligible expense in the Community Priorities Fund and noted that the county has already allotted \$750,000 to the food bank in 2026.

Buchanan stated that there will be a huge demand at food banks due to the loss of federal SNAP dollars and he believes the county could help.

Byrd stated that everyone wants to help in this situation, but funding the food bank has not historically been a county responsibility and any dollars spent on the food bank have to be offset elsewhere, which can lead to costly deferred maintenance or increased capital costs down the road.

Councilmembers continued to discuss food bank funding.

Stremler asked about funding and projects proposed for the Capital Reserve Fund.

Pennucci stated that the reserve fund's purpose is to start building toward a number of projects, such as the first year of a proposed lease for a new

Sheriff's Office location, a new morgue, alternative options for the Northwest Annex location, and additional space and maintenance needs of various county departments. She added that the Capital Reserve would provide cash on hand that would allow the county to act more swiftly if an opportunity were to arise.

Donovan asked for clarification about whether Community Priorities funding is being proposed to cover costs of leasing a new Sheriff's Office location from former councilmember Browne.

Pennucci stated that there is about \$1 million in the Capital Facilities Reserve Fund currently, and the proposal is to add an additional \$3.5 million.

Scanlon asked for clarification regarding the proposed spending of Community Priorities funds.

Pennucci stated that the funds are requested for Justice Project Oversight & Planning Committee facilitation, a Planning & Development Services fee study, Galbraith mountain emergency response, Whatcom Racial Equity Commission support, JAVS Systems for Superior Court Courtroom, code review and update, and more.

Stremmer asked for clarification regarding where funding for a lease for a new Sheriff's Office could come from.

Pennucci stated that the Council could approve the lease but deny the budget request in which case they would have to look at the Sheriff's existing budget authority.

Councilmembers and Deputy Executive Pennucci continued to discuss potential funding allocations.

Scanlon asked whether the Healthy Children's Fund could be used to support food security.

Jill Boudreau, Senior Policy & Project Manager in the Executive's Office, stated that money has gone to the food bank from the Healthy Children's Fund through the vulnerable children's allocation, so that is something that has been done previously.

Ann Beck, Community Health & Human Services Manager, said certain percentages of Healthy Children's Fund dollars have to be allocated in

certain areas per the establishing ordinance and that funding capital projects for childcare will draw down the fund, so decisions will have to be made about where to direct funding.

Elenbaas said he wants to fund the food bank, but he is concerned that the tax structure isn't set up for the county to fund the food bank, and he is interested in providing funding on a shorter timeframe.

Pennucci said that providing a smaller amount for a shorter contract period is an option. She said she would love to recommend supporting the food bank, but they are trying to stabilize the budget and address the needs of the community, and balance all those things.

Donovan stated that he is hoping the Executive's team can bring back some options to provide some one-time funds for the food bank.

Galloway said she wanted to wrap up the discussion by discussing the timeline for additional budget discussions and deliberations.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

2. [AB2025-701](#)

Discussion of proposed amendments to the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update

Kimberly Thulin, Prosecuting Attorney, spoke about a series of motions made at the October 21 Committee of the Whole meeting regarding UGA proposals. She stated that the intention of the motions was to provide feedback, but the language of the motion did not clearly convey that intent. She provided guidance on how Council might rescind the motions.

Byrd moved to rescind the motion to approve the Bellingham UGA at the last Council of the Whole meeting. The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Councilmembers discussed the motion and the appropriate procedure for moving forward.

Donovan moved to hold until the item could be scheduled on the next agenda. Galloway seconded the motion.

Byrd stated that the actions taken at the October 21 meeting were out of order and have to be corrected. He said they should clear the slate and not delay.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated that Council is not allowed to take votes on items that are not on the agenda in a special meeting. She added that the best practice would also be to withdraw the motion to hold, which

could be conflated with holding the current agenda bill item.

Donovan withdrew his motion to hold.

Byrd withdrew his motion to rescind.

Galloway stated that the discussion would resume at the November 5 Committee of the Whole meeting.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on November 18, 2025.

ATTEST:



Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA



Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Jenna Gernand