

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

2:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M.; MAY BEGIN EARLY
(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
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2022-558](#) Presentation from Sustainable Connections regarding the work of the Whatcom Housing Alliance

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Administrative Services Strategic Initiatives Manager, introduced the presentation.

The following people presented:

- Derek Long, Sustainable Connections Executive Director
- Rose Lathrop, Sustainable Connections Program Director

They answered questions about the Fountain District Urban Village, examples of unique financing for workforce housing, and whether there have been discussions about tiny houses and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and having a registry of designs where a local government can pre-approve through the planning process to help streamline some of the building permits.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated they should not just talk about Bellingham and the county for affordable housing but should incorporate more discussions with the other cities.

Lathrop answered a question about a list of policies from the Whatcom Business and Commerce Advisory Committee.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2022-560](#) Presentation from the Port of Bellingham and PUD#1 regarding broadband projects and planning

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Administrative Services Strategic Initiatives Manager, introduced the presentation.

Gina Stark, Port of Bellingham (Port), presented and answered a question about the seventh phase of the East Nooksack Project which could not be seen on the presentation slide.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, asked what the time frame is for the seven phases of the East Nooksack Project and when they expect phase seven to be completed, whether all 464 homes passed may not necessarily connect to this fiber, and whether there is any connection fee and how much that would be.

Stark answered whether there have been any vulnerability risk assessments associated with aerial versus underground fiber as it relates to the flood zone and how flooding might impact some of the infrastructure, whether this project was on time or whether there have been delays, what some of the barriers have been to getting started on construction, whether the requested \$4 million (or a portion thereof) of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds would be part of the \$15-\$17 million infrastructure project for 2,000 homes in areas that were not currently served by the three areas under construction, whether they will make sure that the money they put in will stay owned by the public in perpetuity, whether the Port is headed in the direction of private infrastructure and the Whatcom Public Utility District (PUD) is headed in the direction of public infrastructure, how much the internet service providers (ISPs) are paying the Port, and whether the area that the service is going into is all unincorporated or whether some of it is going into incorporated areas.

Sidhu spoke about finding other ways to get internet to people who will not be covered by this project, looking at how to benefit the maximum amount of people, seeing more transparency of the cost to homes, and the concept of open access and its limitations.

Stark addressed Sidhu's comments and the following additional people spoke:

- Rob Fix, Port of Bellingham Executive Director
- Michael Shepherd, Port of Bellingham Commissioner

They answered why they would not have the infrastructure owned by a public agency in perpetuity, whether we are leveraging the money that PogoZone has, whether we would be able to do this without the incentive of PogoZone taking over the infrastructure in 25 years, whether we are saying that because PogoZone is going to get this property at the end of this agreement

that they are going to back out those costs that they have invested as it related to anyone getting service through this specific pipeline, and whether we could just hire them as a contractor to provide this service so we do not have to turn over the infrastructure at the end.

Galloway spoke about the Councilmembers being more included in the process moving forward, being provided copies of the Irrevocable Right of Use (IRU), being provided notice if those IRUs are being amended, being able to have that communication and transparency throughout the entire process, looking to the broadband team and asking what role the County wants to play in that, and setting aside some of the ARPA dollars for future projects and/or implementation of policies. She is comfortable moving forward with \$3 out of the \$4 million for the Port and would like to continue to monitor the PUD's upcoming feasibility study, and to set forward some conditions of funding.

Stark answered whether there is there a time sensitivity for the Council to make a decision about the request for a portion of the \$4 million ARPA funds.

Frazezy stated she believes it is possible that we can get people served throughout the county quickly without giving away our infrastructure. She echoes what Galloway said about transparency and seeing more of what we are funding. If she is going to agree to the ARPA money she would like to see public ownership in perpetuity of the infrastructure, public access in perpetuity, and the PUD and the Council being able to review the IRU prior to signing.

Fix answered whether public ownership in perpetuity is on the table.

Sidhu spoke about the cost and time frame of putting in fiber versus the cost and time frame of a hybrid model of fiber and wireless delivery. He requested they do a study and come up with a reason why that is not possible.

Donovan stated he would like more information about hybrid models.

Frazezy stated she would like more information about best management practices and SkagitNet. Maybe some things they need to work on are making sure they are all informed and that they are receiving all of the information, and maybe having someone on the board as they move forward.

Donovan stated they will need to continue this discussion.

This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion

- 1. [AB2022-531](#) Discuss a draft interlocal agreement between the City of Blaine and Whatcom County concerning planning, annexation, and development within the Blaine UGA

Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services Department, briefed the Councilmembers and answered whether this is that different than the other interlocals the Council has with the other cities or than earlier versions they have seen.

Aamot stated he is looking for any concerns the Councilmembers may have and he answered whether there are any concerns that Councilmembers *should* have on this or that they might hear from the community.

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 4:17 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on October 25, 2022.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE

