

FILE UNDER AB 2018 - 173A
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SUBMITTED BY: Jean Kershner

July 24, 2018

Dear Council Members,

COUNCIL MEETING
 SCOTW COMMITTEE
EXHIBIT: _____

I am writing because I feel strongly that the island doesn't need a 34 car ferry and that the majority of islanders don't want a 34 car ferry. The Whatcom Chief already is more convenient than most other ferries in the state. A large majority of people who filled out the survey in February said they were fine with waiting 30 minutes for the ferry. How much convenience do we need on an island? People knew when they moved here that ferry waits are part of living on an island.

Why does it make sense to spend over \$9 million on a ferry that is twice the size of the ferry we now have, with all the other infrastructure needs in our county and our country? Why isn't a new ferry for 20 cars sufficient for our needs? That is 25 percent larger than what we have now. Why isn't that big enough? With the Whatcom Chief, our ferry lines are already far shorter than the ferry lines to get to Lopez or Orcas.

The difference in cost between a 20 car ferry and a 34 car ferry is over \$3 million. Why aren't we considering what other urgent priorities the additional county tax dollars could be used for, like bridges that need repair, which are matters of safety?

The ferry committee did try their best to determine the will of the islanders with several public meetings and surveys. And 47 percent of those who responded to the May survey wanted a new ferry that was 28 cars or smaller. 46 percent wanted a 34 car ferry. The rest apparently didn't state a preference and probably wanted the existing ferry. So how can the County justify spending the additional tax money on the 34 car ferry when it is not clear if the majority wants it? How can the County justify this decision with so many other important county priorities such as homelessness and drug addiction?

If the County is going to invest in a larger, more expensive ferry that will use more fuel and contribute more to climate change, it needs to make sure that this is what a majority of islanders want.

Thank you.

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