

RESOLUTION NO. _____

SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE ENERGY CHOICES FOR WHATCOM COUNTY

WHEREAS, during the 2024 legislative session, the Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Bill (ESHB) 1589; and

WHEREAS, on March 28, 2024, Washington Governor Jay Inslee signed ESHB 1589 into law; and

WHEREAS, according to the bill report, ESHB mandates, among other requirements, that Puget Sound Energy (PSE) file an integrated system plan (ISP) with the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) that consolidates PSE’s planning requirements for both gas and electric operations into a single ISP; and

WHEREAS, transitioning homes and businesses from natural gas to electric service can be very costly for homeowners and business owners thus drastically affecting affordability; and

WHEREAS, according to the Building Industry Association of Washington, the cost to convert a home currently served by natural gas to electric is approximately \$40,000; and

WHEREAS, the costs to upgrade the current electrical system will be borne by rate payers, rather than PSE; and

WHEREAS, combining natural gas and electric service will result in expensive upgrades for individual homeowners as well as system improvements which will further burden customers; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of ESHB 1589 do not give any predictability with regard to timeline or costs for customers subject to the transition from natural gas to electric service; and

WHEREAS, a June 2023 Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults found that 68% thought the U.S. should use a mix of energy sources including oil, coal, and natural gas along with renewable sources, while only 31% said the U.S. should phase out the use of oil, coal, and natural gas completely, relying instead on renewable sources; and

WHEREAS, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals determined that the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act (“EPCA”), which prohibits natural gas infrastructure, expressly preempts state and local regulations concerning energy use of natural gas appliances; and

1 **WHEREAS**, government regulations have impacts on the costs and ultimately the
2 affordability of housing; and
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4 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County's 2022-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development
5 Strategy (CEDS) identifies housing availability and affordability as high priority issue affecting
6 Whatcom County's ability to grow economically; and
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8 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Whatcom County Council does hereby
9 support energy choices for residents and business owners in Whatcom County; and
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11 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Whatcom County Council
12 respectfully requests the Washington State Legislature to consider the harmful impacts of ESHB
13 1589 on PSE customers throughout the Puget Sound; and
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15 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Whatcom County Council urges
16 the Legislature to revise state law in the 2025 legislative session regarding transitioning from
17 natural gas to electric utilities, to protect the financial security of residents and businesses.
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19 **APPROVED** this ____ day of _____, 2024.

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22 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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25 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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27 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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29 George Roche (email 5/28/2024/ch)
30 Civil Deputy Prosecutor