WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICE
COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

DATE: May 21, 2026

RE: Direction on the 2027-28 Council Office Budget (AB2026-346)

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2026, the Whatcom County Council passed a motion to create a 3-councilmember workgroup (Scanlon, Stremler, Galloway) to identify reduction scenarios for the 7% and 10% reduction targets requested for Phase 1 of the Executive's biennium budget development. Draft additional services requests (ASRs) for Phase 1 are due by May 29th, after which the Executive will inform departments on what reductions to make and a refined list of ASRs will be due in early July (Phase 2).

Attached is a revised draft list of ASRs for the Council Office. Please note, the following:

1. A JPOP consultant is not included and council office staff will be reassigned support the JPOP.
2. Community Conversations events will have no budget for space rentals and will need to use only free locations.
3. Sheriff's Deputy at evening council meetings is removed from the budget.
4. All council travel funds are removed from the budget.
5. Additional reductions to achieve the low (7%) and high (10%) scenarios would have to be deducted from salaries and benefits cost centers through furloughs, elimination of cost-of-living adjustments, reduction in staff positions through attrition, a restructuring, and/or reduction in staff positions. Please note, specifics on how restructuring is achieved can be discussed at a later date and/or in executive session pursuant to RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g) as long as discussion complies with the stated exception.

According to the Executive Office presentation on May 12th (see AB2026-331), actual required reductions will likely fall between 7-10%, and proposals must be executable (viable options only). Ultimately, council has full discretion over the county budget as a whole and must weigh decisions not only within the council office budget but among all departments of county government.

NEXT STEPS

<u>Council direction (via motion) is requested on ASRs for the 2027-2028 Council Office budget:</u>

1. **Confirm <u>reduction amount</u> to propose for the Council Office budget.**
   (*e.g. I move to request the clerk submit a low ___% and high ___% reduction in the council budget for the 2027-2028 biennium*)

2. **Please approve submitting the following specific list of ASRs reviewed by the councilmember workgroup.**
   (*e.g. I move to request the clerk submit the ASR list on the 'Staff Memo for 5.26.2026' on file for the Phase 1 budget deadline.* Or, if edits are requested, please amend the main motion to edit the ASR list.)

Council Office Draft ASRs 2027-2028					
Acct	**Description**	**2027 ASR**	**2028 ASR**	**Continuing or One Time**	**Notes**
NEEDS: Items needed to address continuing operations of the Council Office					
6120	BOE per diem and extra help	$ 35,000	$ 35,000	Continuing	Adding $35,000 to cover BOE per diem for hearing days. 25-26 funding was one time not continuing ($40,500 base budget is $10,500 BOE per diem and $30,000 interns) [see intern reduction below]
6520	Software	$ 900	$ 900	Continuing	3 Adobe pro licenses for ADA compliance
6610	Contractual svcs-(captioning)	$ 6,000	$ 6,000	Continuing	Meeting captioning cost for ADA compliance
6630	Professional services (Hearing Examiner)	$ -	$ 2,500	Continuing	2026 contract $118,779.60. Estimated 3% COLA each year totals $122,364 (2027), $126,035 (2028)
6699	Other Services - Interfund (Security)	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	Continuing	Contracted courthouse security for after hours meetings - approx $2500/quarter.
		$ 51,900	$ 54,400		
MISCELLANEOUS REDUCTIONS: Potential cost savings in operations expenses					
6320	Office & operating supplies	$ (3,000)	$ (3,000)	Continuing	Base budget is $8,904. Leaves $5904. The 2025 remaining balance was $3,350.34
6330	Printing	$ (3,000)	$ (3,000)	Continuing	Base budget is $5,678. Leaves $2,678. The 2025 remaining balance was $1,766.25
6340	Books, publications, subscriptions	$ (600)	$ (600)	Continuing	CDN, and books Leaves $400 remaining.
6510	Tools & equipment	$ (6,000)	$ (6,000)	One Time	No major anticipated costs in next 2 years, leaves $5,600 for replacements if needed
6625	Software maintenance contracts	$ 750	$ 750	Continuing	Funding for annual subscriptions including Canva, Dropbox, Power BI
6655	Interpreter services	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	Leaves $2000
6699	Security - Sheriff's Deputy	$ (14,000)	$ (14,000)	Continuing	Remove Sheriff Deputy from evening Council mtgs
6720.S.210150	Telephone - Mobile (Council Cellphones)	$ (3,500)	$ (3,500)	One Time	5 CM cell phones, reduce only 2027-28 budget for only those currently with a county-issued cell phone
6780	Travel-Educ/Training (BOE)	$ (1,500)	$ (1,500)	One Time	Leaves $0 for travel, remote participate still possible
6780.S.210689	Travel, education, training (Clerks)	$ (1,000)	$ (1,000)	One Time	Leaves $0
7070	Minor remodeling	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	Leaves $0
7115	Membership & Assoc Dues	$ (3,000)	$ (3,000)	One Time	Leaves $0, no staff membership reimbursement
7140	Meeting refreshments	$ (500)	$ (500)	Continuing	Leaves $0
		$ (36,350)	$ (36,350)		
COUNCIL DISCRETION					
6790	Travel - Other	$ (15,000)	$ (15,000)	Continuing	Reduces Travel-Other to $0. Eliminates additiona travel funds allocated to each councilmember. Total travel spent 2025 $13,500. does not include registration - see 7110 ($3,000).
6790.S.210151	Travel - Mark Stremler	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S.210152	Travel - Jon Scanlon	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S,210153	Travel - Ben Elenbaas	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S.210154	Travel - Kaylee Galloway	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S.210155	Travel - Elizabeth Boyle	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S.210156	Travel - Barry Buchanan	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6790.S.210157	Travel - Jessica Rienstra	$ (5,000)	$ (5,000)	Continuing	
6120	Extra help - BOE & IPRTF & Interns	$ (30,000)	$ (30,000)	Continuing	Eliminate all funding for council internship program ($40,500 base budget is $10,500 BOE per diem and $30,000 interns)
		$ (80,000)	$ (80,000)		
	TOTAL	$ (64,450)	$ (61,950)		
	%	**-2.31%**	**-2.13%**		
SALARIES AND BENEFITS REDUCTIONS (REQUIRED TO MEET REDUCTION TARGETS)					
Salaries and benefits (6110, 6120, 6130, 6210, 6230, 6245, 6255, 6259, 6269)	Difference to get to 7%	$130,912	$142,058		Low and high scenarios achieved through reductions in salaries and benefits cost centers through furloughs, elimination of COLAs, and reduction in FTEs through attrition (retirement to temp) and/or elimination of positions)
	Difference to get to 10%	$214,639	$229,490		
		2027	2028		
Council Office budget:		$2,790,890	$2,914,397		
7% reduction		$195,362	$204,008		
10% reduction		$279,089	$291,440		