

Whatcom County Council Special Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

9 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - RECESS FOR LUNCH FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 1:00 P.M. -
ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN
INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL
360.778.5010); AGENDA REVISION 3.2.2026**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Elizabeth Boyle
Barry Buchanan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jessica Rienstra
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements

Items Added by Revision

1. [AB2026-208](#) Letter of support for the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion/Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD) program and the Recovery Navigator Program (RNP)

APPROVED REQUEST

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Public Comment

1. [AB2026-184](#) Public comments on the draft Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1 (Introduction and Growth Projections), Chapter 2 (Land Use), and Chapter 3 (Housing)

RECEIVED

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-185](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1, Introduction and Growth Projections

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 1 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated March 3, 2026 (which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to add "per the United States Constitution" to Item 5 after "supreme law of the land."

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to change "county" to "country" in Item 5 so that the second sentence under the subheading "The Labor that Built Whatcom County" reads:

Our country has depended upon the labor, wisdom, and skills of enslaved peoples, Indigenous Peoples, immigrants, and migrants who have often worked within harsh and unjust systems.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to amend Policy 1B-2 to insert "Whatcom County government-to-Tribal government" (replacing government-to-government) and add "in an effort to" after "work collaboratively with the Tribes" in Item 8 so that it reads:

Work collaboratively with the Tribes in an effort to develop a mutually agreed upon engagement and coordination framework that incorporates regular and meaningful Whatcom County government-to-Tribal government cooperation promoting open lines of communication, information sharing, and collaborative decision making.

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to strike "protect" and insert "conserve" in Policy 1B-4 (Item 8).

MOTION 6:

Motion approved insert "economic and" before "racial disparities" in Goal 1C (Item 9).

MOTION 7:

Motion approved to amend Policy 1C-4 (Item 9) to state "equity and equality of opportunity framework" rather than "equity framework."

MOTION 8:

Motion approved to retain the Planning Commission recommendation for population projection and distribution as demonstrated in Table 5 (as 2,662 for Birch Bay UGA and 1,137 for Columbia Valley UGA).

MOTION 9:

Motion approved to amend Table 5 to move the 9,000 (Growth Allocation) number in "Areas outside of UGAs" to OFM (Office of Financial Management) low, which would be 7,243.

MOTION 10:

Motion approved to amend the Total Whatcom County (Growth Allocation) to 65,881 in Table 5.

2. [AB2026-186](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2, Land Use

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 2 using the Substitute Preliminary Council Draft dated March 3, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to strike "and housing" from Item 3.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to add "where applicable" before "retain existing light and heavy industrial zoning" in new Policy 2A-8 (Item 6).

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to reconsider the vote to add "where applicable" before "retain existing light and heavy industrial zoning" in new Policy 2A-8 (Item 6).

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to add "where applicable" before "retain existing light and heavy industrial zoning" in new Policy 2A-8 (Item 6).

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to define "enhancement" in Items 19, 20, and 21.

MOTION 7:

Motion approved to add "where applicable" to (the start of the second sentence of) Policy 2N-6 (Item 29) so that it reads:

Where applicable within urban growth areas, preserve existing zoning designations for properties with operating industries and protect existing industrial and maritime developments and industrially zoned areas from encroachment by incompatible uses and developments on adjacent lands.

MOTION 8:

Motion approved to retain Planning Commission's recommendation for Policy 2U-9.

MOTION 9:

Motion approved to strike "and legal" from Policy 2DD-2(C)(8) (Item 49).

MOTION 10:

Motion approved to not include Item 47.

MOTION 11:

Motion approved to make Policy 2DD-2(E)(1) (Item 51) its own policy in Chapter 2.

MOTION 12:

Motion approved to insert the words "increasing building" before "elevation" in Policy 2W-1 (Item 42), Policy 2Z-1 (Item 43), and Policy 2AA-2 (Item 45) so that it reads:

Development that does occur should take mitigative measures like increasing building elevation to reduce risk of harm and damage from flooding.

3. [AB2026-188](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 3, Housing

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 3 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 3.3.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to amend Policy 3C-9 (Item 28) to add "and other GMA requirements are met" to the end of the final sentence so that it reads:

In areas adjacent to UGAs with proximity to urban utilities, include sites into the UGA when accompanied by a property owner commitment to produce affordable housing and other GMA requirements are met.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to move new Policy 3J-6 (Item 45) under Goal 3K as Policy 3K-10.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to add the word "continued" to Policy 3K-2 (Item 46) so that it reads "continued elimination of racial covenants."

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to amend Item 20 to strike "industrial" and insert "commercial" so that it reads:

Where feasible, compatible mixed land uses should be encouraged in an effort to balance the need for both residential and commercial growth and development.

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to amend new Policy 3K-9 to change "government-to-government" to "Whatcom County government-to-Tribal government" in Item 47.

Other Business**Adjournment**