

Whatcom County Council Planning and Development Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

2:55 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 3:15 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Jessica Rienstra called the meeting to order at 2:55 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-409](#) Discussion of a draft ordinance imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance or processing of applications and permits for the establishment of new or expansion of existing civil detention facilities

Rienstra briefed the councilmembers on the draft ordinance. She spoke about hearing from the community but that sometimes they are hearing about things the Council cannot do anything about. She stated it is important though to recognize where their responsibility does lie and ensure they are addressing that, and she spoke about the draft ordinance.

Scanlon spoke about how much he has been hearing on this issue from the community, that they have learned from other communities that have taken similar action, and focusing this on just the unincorporated county since that is where Council's powers lie.

Elenbaas moved to table.

The motion was seconded by Stremler.

Elenbaas withdrew his motion and read a statement that he wrote to Council's legal team and the clerk about why he does not feel this is an appropriate ordinance that they should be addressing and spending Council, staff, and legal time on.

Rienstra stated this is a discussion of a draft and a working document that those working on it feel is incredibly relevant and identifies and addresses a gap in the code. She asked if legal had any comment around the specification between the civil detention facility and the assumption that there is not a need for this because it is already covered in code.

Kimberly Thulin, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, spoke about her legal

perspective and review of the draft.

Scanlon stated there have been a lot of conversations with people who would be involved in potentially implementing this and with legal, and stated the ordinance is about getting ahead of a hypothetical, given that there has been an expansion of federal civil detention facilities across the country.

Elenbaas stated they are putting a moratorium on something that cannot happen and that if it is not defined (in county code), it is expressly prohibited.

Rienstra thanked everyone for their input and work and stated they will continue to take all the information in as they consider how they would like the draft to look moving forward.

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 3:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Jessica Rienstra-via email 6/3/2026

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jessica Rienstra, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

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