

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 27, 2025

1:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 2:00 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Jon Scanlon

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee member Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, and Jon Scanlon

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Kaylee Galloway, and Mark Stremmer

Announcements

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-380](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Chapter 20.82, Public Utilities, to increase allowable power line voltage to 230 kilovolts in zones currently limited to 115 kilovolts

Lucas Clark, Planning and Development Services Department, read from a presentation (on file) on a history of how Whatcom County came to have a limit on electrical infrastructure greater than 115 kilovolts (kV), the current state of transmission outside of Whatcom County, the proposed code change, the conditional use criteria, and types of poles that Puget Sound Energy (PSE) could use if they decide to upgrade the electrical infrastructure.

Brian Heinrich, Puget Sound Energy (PSE), answered questions about the width of right of ways compared to what they are now and how often scheduled maintenance occurs. He stated PSE manages the maintenance on right-of-way vegetation and it is regular maintenance. He answered where a 230 kV line might be placed, and stated it would be subject to further study. He answered how other counties' codes in their service area compare in terms of how lines of this capacity are regulated, and stated 230 is allowed in the rest of the service territory and subject to conditional use almost everywhere. He answered whether the proposal for the upgrade is strictly for local use and not for out of country, and stated he believes it would accommodate both but the number one purpose is to meet the needs in this service territory.

Clark answered whether there was an official recommendation on the ordinance from the Planning Commission and stated it was unanimously recommended to forward to Council as it is.

Galloway spoke about letters of approval received by other entities.

Heinrich answered what voltage would be needed to carry new electricity generation (such as geothermal) across the county, and stated he is not sure.

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 1:55 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Ben Elenbaas-via email 6/20/2025

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Ben Elenbaas, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE