

Whatcom County Council Water Work Session

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

10:30 AM

Civic Center Building Conference Room / Hybrid Meeting

HYBRID MEETING - (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Barry Buchanan, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, Kathy Kershner, and Todd Donovan

Absent: 2 - Tyler Byrd, and Ben Elenbaas

Announcements

Meeting Materials

[AB2023-491](#) Meeting Materials for the Water Work Session September 19, 2023

Meeting material were **RECEIVED and on file.**

Watershed Planning Update

Buchanan stated this item would be switched with the second item on the agenda. See notes on this item below.

2024-2029 Water Resources Improvement Plan

Kraig Olason, Public Works Department, spoke about the projects listed on the 2024-2029 Six-Year Water Resources Improvement Program (on file in the packet) and answered questions.

Lake Whatcom Stormwater Projects

He answered questions about some of the projects and then discussed with Councilmembers whether these projects are keeping us on track with meeting our 50-year Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) goals for phosphorus reduction.

Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department, stated we will get closer to answering whether they are meeting goals as the new modeling results come next year.

Birch Bay Watershed & Aquatic Resources Management District (BBWARM)

Olason answered what the acronyms mean under the Phase columns of the plan, and whether people living in the Lake Whatcom stormwater and Birch Bay projects areas are contributing to the flood control zone dollars.

River and Flood

Paula Harris, Public Works Department, presented the river and flood projects and answered questions about FEMA funding for property acquisitions and whether the County will get reimbursed for properties purchased while they are waiting for funding.

Watershed Planning Update

The following people gave updates:

- Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department
- Paula Harris, Public Works Department

They updated and answered questions about:

- A recent tour of key locations in the watershed with people from the Community Development Block Grant to show them the work we are doing.
- How grants and Federal funding might be used toward flood protection.
- Flood resilience planning with the city Mayors.
- A new international task force.
- Upcoming supplemental budget requests coming to the Council to continue the Floodplain Integrated Planning (FLIP) process, add staff to the flood program, and add budget authority for additional capital projects.
- Completed capital projects and work toward the purchase of three houses. Stoyka answered where the money for capital projects is coming from.

Stoyka gave the following updates and answered questions:

- They are hearing that adjudication will be filed in April of 2024 and notices will go out at that time to every single water right holder in WRIA 1, which includes every single exempt well owner. He answered whether Lummi Island is part of WRIA 1, how Lummi Island water ties into the Nooksack basin, and whether there are wells that they might be missing because they do not show up on the exempt well list.
- They are working with the Department of Ecology (DOE) to get a grant in place to help the County do some outreach to all water users and extra outreach to exempt water users.
- They are working with DOE to do technical studies and are recommending that they move forward with the studies,

acknowledging that they cannot get reimbursed until the adjudication is filed.

- There was a large education forum put on for water week by the Whatcom Watershed Improvement Network to start to get the word out about adjudication.
- The County was awarded a \$5.517 million grant from the DOE toward the purchase of 5,000 acres in the Stewart Mountain Community Forest and the Whatcom Land Trust has received \$3 million in grant funding toward the purchase. They are still looking for funding opportunities.
- At the last meeting of the Watershed Management Board, the board approved the goals and objectives for the next (2023-2025) work plan.
- There will be an Additional Service Request (ASR) coming through the budgeting process to fund the climate action program.
- There is a meeting tomorrow with counterparts in British Columbia, Canada on how to address high fecal coliform counts coming from tributaries north of the border.

He gave updates on upcoming supplemental budget requests and the next Water Work Session meeting date, and answered questions about which tributaries are coming here from Canada.

Proposed Fish Barrier Removal Program

The following people read from a presentation (on file in the meeting materials):

- Gary Stoyka, Public Works Department
- John Thompson, Public Works Department

They answered how many fish barrier removals we are doing a year and whether it will take about 40 years to get all 80 repairs done to the culverts determined to have the most significant habitat gain, whether all 80 are in Whatcom County, and how many State road projects are within Whatcom County. They spoke about grant funding for these barrier removal projects, the need for staff capacity to accomplish them, and next steps. They answered whether Federal match funding will provide 100% of the needed funds, how long the funding from the infrastructure bill keeps recurring, what our ongoing framework is for engaging the Tribes, State and Federal governments in this work to make sure our culvert removals are happening in a coordinated approach, and what our plan is for community education as we work through these infrastructure projects.

The following additional people answered the questions:

- Erika Douglas, Public Works Department
- James Lee, Public Works Department

WRIA 1 Planning Unit update

The following people spoke:

- Chris Elder, Public Works Department
- Dan Eisses, Birch Bay Water and Sewer District and WRIA 1 Planning Unit

Eisses updated Councilmembers on the last Planning Unit meeting and their discussion about tying land use to water supply. He spoke about the West Ferndale area and a couple of water associations where wells went dry this summer and stated it was a good example of why land use and water supply need to be tied together. There may be some related requests coming from the Planning Unit.

John Thompson, Public Works Department, answered whether a \$13 million award of a Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) Board grant for Whatcom County salmon recovery is related to the WRIA efforts.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription