

Whatcom County Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

10 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN LATE - ADJOURNS BY 11:30 A.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Barry Buchanan

Also Present: Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmler

Announcements

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Buchanan moved to recommend approval of Consent Agenda items one through eighteen.

Byrd stated he had questions on several agenda items.

Consent Agenda Item #1 (AB2025-580)

Malora Christensen, Health and Community Services, answered whether this is new behavioral health funding that was not previously included in the budget, and stated the contract before them is for the Recovery Navigator Program and the funding, which is used for the LEAD program, is a continuation of State funding and included in the biennial budget. She stated they may be making some budget supplementals for additional spending authority in 2026 but that has not been determined yet.

Consent Agenda Item #2 (AB2025-582)

Rajeev Majumdar, Hearing Examiner, answered what amount the County is currently paying. He stated there has been a three percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase since the original contract amount, and this new contract would be three percent increase above that. He stated this is an extension of the current contract and would go through December 31, 2026. Then the County would be required to go out again for a public bid process.

Councilmembers discussed with Majumdar whether the three percent COLA was already built in to the contract, that he has a proposal with most jurisdictions to tie COLA increases with that of non-exempt employees so he thought the three percent from last year was a good estimation for 2026, and that this contract would not start until January of 2026.

Byrd stated his request would be that they hold it so they can assess it as they assess the entirety of the budget.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, answered when Council could expect to get a copy of the biennial budget proposal, and stated they are starting the conversation today and that the executive is not intending to propose an across-the board ten percent cut. She stated changes and discussions on unrepresented COLAs could occur toward the end of the budget process and the negotiation process is just getting underway.

Byrd moved that they recommend to hold this and have it brought back when the budget is brought to them for review.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Byrd and Buchanan

Nay: 1 - Donovan

Consent Agenda Item #9 (**AB2025-609**) (Also applies to item #18 - **AB2025-627**)

The following people answered questions:

- Caleb Erickson, Sheriff's Office
- Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office

Erickson discussed with councilmembers that this is the contract for preparation of all ingredients to prepare meals for the in-custody offenders (it is for the main jail, the work center, and Juvenile detention), that they would make the food in the kitchen as they do now but it would be a different vendor, and that the contract term is to finish 2025 (after the end of the current contract in September) and for the full year of 2026.

Byrd asked about whether there could be coordination between the jail and a proposed café on the 2nd floor of the courthouse to use the same vendor.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, stated they hope to turn their attention to that 2nd floor RFP in the next couple weeks, but that it would be a more complicated situation to have it co-mingled with providing food for the jail. They are also under a time crunch for the jail vendor.

Erickson stated they need to get the vendor in place because they only have a couple weeks.

Byrd stated they can look at it again when the contract comes up for renewal.

Consent Agenda Item #14 (AB2025-622)

Donovan stated that AB2025-622 is a substitute version.

Byrd stated the community has been frustrated with the Opportunity Council's management of the building and the level of access for use by the community. He asked if that has improved and whether they have considered putting out a request for proposal (RFP) again for the management of the building since the community has approved its own parks district. The new parks board could manage this facility on behalf of the community as is done in Birch Bay.

Bennett Knox, Parks and Recreation Department Director, stated his understanding is that there has been an improvement in the management of the facility and they have not considered a new RFP. He stated Parks is trying to build a collaborative approach and asked that they give them an opportunity to do that.

Consent Agenda Item #17 (AB2025-626)

Scanlon stated he had an email conversation with Stephanie Kraft, Superior and Juvenile Court Administrator, about this item and about the legislature cutting funding for processing BECCA cases. He asked if the Administration is looking at that as a potential legislative ask for the next session.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated it is.

Councilmembers voted on Consent items one, and three through 18 (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2025-580](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization to fund the Recovery Navigator Program to enhance LEAD programming in the amount of \$256,227.50, for a total amended contract amount of \$1,639,137.50

**Buchanan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR
AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following**

vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

2. [AB2025-582](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Whatcom Law Group/Rajeev Majumdar for 2026 hearing examiner services, in an amount of \$118,779.60, for a total amended contract amount of \$344,599.60

Byrd's motion that the Contract be RECOMMENDED TO HOLD IN COMMITTEE carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Byrd, and Buchanan

Nay: 1 - Donovan

Motion Approved that they recommend to hold this and have it brought back to them when the budget is brought to them for review.

3. [AB2025-583](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to provide funding for the Alternative Response Team (ART) Program in the amount of \$1,174,000, for a total amended agreement amount of \$4,561,000

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

4. [AB2025-586](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) for the Registered Sex Offender Address and Residency Verification Program, in the amount of \$130,767.67

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

5. [AB2025-589](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Snohomish County for neuropathology services, in the amount of \$4,500

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

6. [AB2025-604](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Administrative Office of the Courts to support Mental Health Court, in the amount of \$194,198

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

7. [AB2025-606](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a five year grant agreement between Whatcom County and the US Forest Service for the Offender Forestry Work Crew Program in the amount of \$540,062.62

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

8. [AB2025-607](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Ecology for Watershed Resources Inventory Area No. 1 (WRIA 1) water rights adjudication technical assistance, in the amount of \$200,000 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

Buchanan moved that the Contract (FCZDBS) be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

9. [AB2025-609](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a 15-month contract between Whatcom County and Trinity Services Group, Inc., for Jail Food Services, in the amount of \$1,239,500

Buchanan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

10. [AB2025-611](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Summit Construction Group, Inc for tenant improvements and HVAC replacement at the Parks Department administrative office and annex in the amount of \$58,694 for a total amended contract amount of \$999,950

Buchanan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

11. [AB2025-613](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Ecology to provide a Washington Conservation Corps Crew and supervisor, in the amount of \$258,720 (Council acting as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors)

Buchanan moved that the Contract (FCZDBS) be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

12. [AB2025-615](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to expand the operational capabilities of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion//Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD) Program in the amount of \$1,466,580, for a total amended agreement amount of \$1,886,580

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

13. [AB2025-621](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to coordinate and implement prevention programs and strategies in the amount of \$2,350,000, for a total amended agreement amount of \$3,670,000

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

14. [AB2025-622](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and the Opportunity Council for operation of the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in the amount of \$50,000 in 2025 and \$51,500 annually thereafter, for a total contract amount of \$155,412 in 2025 and \$156,912 annually thereafter

Buchanan moved that the SUBSTITUTE Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

15. [AB2025-624](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Lydia Place to support the rehabilitation and remodel of a transitional housing facility for large families, in the amount of \$166,950

Buchanan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

16. [AB2025-625](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Administrative Office of the Courts for services related to the Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem (VGAL) Program, in the amount of \$84,523

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

17. [AB2025-626](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Administrative Office of the Courts for services related to Becca cases regarding At-Risk Youth, Truancy, and Child in Need of Services, in the amount of \$98,853

Buchanan moved that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

18. [AB2025-627](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an agreement between Whatcom County and Trinity Food Services Group for food services for juvenile detention, in the amount not to exceed \$10,476 for the remainder of 2025 and \$41,904 for 2026

Buchanan moved that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

Special Presentation

1. [AB2025-602](#) Quarterly Report from the Finance Division
- Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director, read from a presentation (on file) and started by saying the second quarter financial report is unremarkable. There was no Council discussion.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-596](#) Discussion of a resolution to declare Whatcom County real property as surplus and approve transfer

Andrew Hester, Public Works Department, briefed the councilmembers and referred to the memo (on file). He answered where the property is and stated there will be a public hearing on the first Council meeting in October.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

2. [AB2025-610](#) Discussion of a resolution amending the 2025 Flood Control Zone District and Subzones Budget, request no. 3, in the amount of \$105,000
- There were no questions on this item.
- This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**
3. [AB2025-617](#) Discussion of an ordinance establishing a project-based budget for the Jail Reentry Improvements project
- Scanlon stated a number of people in the community, including the Sheriff's Office, attended a reentry simulation in Kitsap County and he asked if there were any lessons from that which came into this project here.
- Caleb Erickson, Sheriff's Office, briefed the councilmembers on the proposed ordinance, and stated they learned that having Medicaid or some form of medical insurance at release is hugely important to the people who are being released from custody, and that identification is also a key ingredient in their success. He spoke about how they are developing a system to help people with getting identification while they are still in custody.
- This agenda item was DISCUSSED.**
4. [AB2025-629](#) Discussion of an ordinance amending the 2025 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 10, in the amount of \$1,820,416
- Stremmer asked about request #4988 to fund EMS dispatch services in alignment with new budget numbers from What-Comm and what it means "to respond" to the 40 percent increase in EMS dispatch costs.
- Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated it may have been a typographical error, but generally, What-Comm sets its budget and it is not always concurrent with the County's budget process, hence the need to true up the figures.
- Donovan stated that it is an odd set-up that the What-Comm Board can put things in the County budget. They have had discussions in previous years about what the composition of that board might look like going forward, and he would like to come back to that in two weeks.
- Scanlon asked about request #5073 to fund conflict assignments and overflow cases for indigent defendants, and asked how long this gets us through and whether there is anything they are proposing for the mid-biennium review to make sure we can continue to cover these costs in the future.

Raylene King, Superior Court Clerk, stated she anticipates that there is probably going to be a need next year as well but they are hoping some of the future restructuring they are looking at might help with that. However, with new caseload standards and the County's space limitations, there could be additional costs moving forward. They are reaching out to outside attorneys to take some of the violent offenses so they have a larger pool to choose from. She spoke about this money getting them through the end of the year and stated they are working with the Executive's Office on some restructuring to see what they can do for the mid-biennium.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, stated there is a policy choice of whether to increase their budget for next year or to keep a higher-than-policy-required fund balance in the General Fund because they know there are a number of potential things that could increase. She answered whether they are seeking a higher target now for the General Fund balance, and spoke about why it is advisable.

Byrd went back to the discussion regarding EMS dispatch services. He asked what percentage of calls are dispatched in the rural county versus city jurisdictions and whether the amounts being requested that we pay at this time are in equal proportion to that or if we are paying a higher proportion. He stated he strongly believes that the Council needs to reassess the makeup and structure of the What-Comm Board and also the consolidation of Prospect and What-Comm.

Jed Holmes, Executive's Office, answered the question about the proportion of the cost allocations, and stated that law enforcement and EMS are separate so calls are covered by the EMS system and fund regardless of where they originated. There is a formula that applies to agencies across the board for law enforcement.

Donovan stated the bigger discussion of how What-Comm works and the board is one they should revisit soon.

Donovan asked about request #5128 to fund phase II of Stewart Mt Community Forest and the ownership model that they left hanging. He asked for some background on where they are with that.

Pennucci reminded the councilmembers of a presentation and subsequent discussion and motion at the August 6 Finance and Administrative Services Committee and Council meetings (see **AB2025-560** and **561**). She stated

there was a request for additional funding from the seller in order to be willing to extend the closing dates to the end of the year to give time for the Land Trust and all the parties involved to come to an agreement. The additional \$200,000 of funding would be a County contribution from the Conservation Futures Fund toward the increased sale. She spoke about the balance of the fund and that they recommend the ownership model previously discussed.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated Council could make a motion tonight under the Committee Reports header.

Rachel Vasak, Whatcom Land Trust Executive Director, spoke about the request and that the Land Trust is also taking on some of the increased costs of the sale.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2025-558](#) Ordinance amending the 2025 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 9, in the amount of \$956,986

Buchanan moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

2. [AB2025-587](#) Request for motion to approve the 2025-2027 Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) Plan

Buchanan moved that the Request for Motion be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL OF REQUEST. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

3. [AB2025-612](#) Request Council review and approval of the Economic Development Board's recommendation for 2026 funding for infrastructure and housing projects

***Byrd moved* that the Request for Motion be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL OF REQUEST.**

Jill Boudreau, Executive's Office, read from a presentation (on file).

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, gave a summary of the Economic

Development Investment Board's motions and votes on the funding applications.

Byrd's motion that the Request for Motion be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Byrd, Donovan, and Buchanan

Nay: 0

Schott-Bresler and Boudreau answered what the options are for potentially advancing the Opportunity Council Bellis Fair Senior Housing project. Schott-Bresler stated the motion for this project narrowly failed but it is ultimately up to the Council.

Donovan moved to recommend to use EDI money to fund the Bellis Fair Senior Housing project.

The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Councilmembers discussed needing a better definition for workforce housing, whether this project would fit that purpose, making a decision about one project without weighing it against the other unfunded projects, that demographic restrictions were not part of the request for proposal and probably should not be imposed at this point in the process, that it is not necessarily right to allocate money just because it is there if a project does not fit the bill, and whether they could get more context around what the other affordable housing sources are (such as House Bill 1590 funds).

Boudreau stated that both the Bellis Fair Senior Housing project and the Bellingham Housing Authority - Unity Street Project (which was voted to be funded) are shovel ready for construction in 2026.

Byrd moved to recommend to hold for two weeks. He stated he would like the Business and Commerce Committee to weigh in on this and give their feedback, would like to understand the definition of workforce housing, and would like to know what other funds are available for this project.

The motion to recommend to hold **failed** by the following vote:

Aye: 1 - Byrd

Nay: 2 - Buchanan and Donovan

Donovan's motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Buchanan and Donovan

Nay: 1 - Byrd

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.

Motion approved to use EDI money to fund the Bellis Fair Senior Housing project.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Todd Donovan-via email 9/22/2025

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE