CHAPTER 12 – Climate					
#	**Page**	**Section/Policy**	**Proposed Amendment**	**Sponsor**	**Meeting**
1	12-1	Purpose	The Climate Element is required under RCW 36.70A.020~~.~~, which ~~RCW 36.70A.020~~ requires cities and counties to use their comprehensive plan to build resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 10/7/25 COTW
2	12-1/2	Conformity with State Laws and Regulations	The Climate Element conforms with the 2023 Department of Commerce Climate Element Intermediate Planning Guidance for local governments planning under the Growth Management Act. ~~In 2025, Whatcom County will also review the Element for conformity with the full guidance that reflects the results of a rulemaking process for HB 1181.~~	PUBLIC WORKS	
3	12-2	Footnote	[1] The Whatcom County 2022 Greenhouse Gas Inventory produced by Washington Department of Commerce does not include some data sources, including wood burning, ferry operations, solid waste processing, and closed landfills which accounts for the difference in ~~255,453~~162,062 MTCO2e between the state inventory and planning inventory.	PUBLIC WORKS	
4	12-3	Background Summary	The 2022 Whatcom County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory quantified emissions produced by activities across Whatcom County, including emissions from the built environment, industrial processes, transportation, solid waste and wastewater treatment, refrigerant usage, and land use. In 2022, Whatcom County produced an estimated ~~8,121,734~~8,377,187 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2e), which equates to approximately 35.1 MTCO2e per capita. Globally, in 2022, the estimated emissions total was 57.4 gigatons of CO2e. For a more detailed discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and emissions trends and projections, see the Appendix. *Note: See the 2025 Whatcom County Emissions Trends and Projections Reports, as well as the 2026 Washington Department of Commerce- Whatcom County Greenhouse Gas Inventory for more information regarding methodology and forecasting.*	PUBLIC WORKS	
5	12-3/4	Background Summary	Consistent with the 2050 statewide net zero greenhouse gas emissions target set by the Washington State Legislature in RCW 70A.45.020 and adopted in Whatcom County Countywide Planning Policy T3, Whatcom County sets the following interim performance indicators for the 2030 Climate Element implementation progress report: • By 2030, all electric utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet interim targets for greenhouse gas neutrality under WAC 194-40-040. • By 2030, natural gas utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet each two-year therm conservation target, consistent with RCW 80.28.380.	PUBLIC WORKS	

			• By 2030, target 45,174 registered battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric passenger vehicles (PHEVs) registered in Whatcom County, consistent with the Washington State Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council forecast. • By 2030, reduce annual vehicle miles traveled per capita across incorporated and unincorporated Whatcom County by 3% to 5,731 VMT per capita. *Note:* See: *April 7th Whatcom County Council of the Whole staff memo for discussion.*		
6	12-6	NEW Policy 12.2.9	Policy 12.2.9: Review bidding and procurement policies to prioritize lower-carbon building processes, sustainable and/or reclaimed building materials, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and alternative and active transportation infrastructure (such as EV charging and bicycle storage) in County funded capital projects. *Note: similar to Policy 12.8.15, which focuses on transportation*	Galloway	
7	12-8	Policy 12.4.1	Assist property owners regulated under the Clean Buildings Performance Standard in accessing incentives to reduce building energy use and meet early compliance deadlines for Tier 1 and 2 buildings.	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 10/7/25 COTW
8	12-9	Policy 12.4.8	Partner with Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, K-12 schools and skills centers, Northwest Workforce Council, the Port of Bellingham, the Whatcom Working Waterfront Coalition, cities, unions and apprenticeship programs, and local businesses to address workforce skill gaps in emerging sectors that support climate action.	Galloway	
9	12-9	Ecosystems	Ecosystems play a vital role in mitigating climate change by capturing and storing carbon. Protecting, enhancing, and restoring forests, wetlands, aquatic ecosystems, and green space contributes to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration. These nature-based solutions to greenhouse gas reduction can also build resilience by mitigating against natural hazards and climate impacts, protecting biodiversity and fish and wildlife habitat, and improvinge water and air quality.	Galloway	
10	12-10	Policy 12.5.5	Discourage the conversion of forests, agricultural land, grasslands, wetlands, critical areas, riparian areas, estuaries, and other high carbon storage areas for uses that are incompatible with habitat preservation and carbon sequestration goals.	Galloway	
11	12-10	Policy 12.7.2	Prioritize investments to reduce vehicle emissions and miles travelled in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by air and water pollution.	Galloway	

			Note: 6PPD-q is a highly toxic byproduct from tires that contaminate waterways through stormwater runoff.		
12	12-11	Policy 12.7.4	~~Support~~Coordinate with existing utility-run or state administered programs that provide financial assistance or subsidies for low-income households and landlords to improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, and access renewable energy. *Note: See comment letter from Cascade Natural Gas*	PUBLIC WORKS	
13	12-11	Transportation	Greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies for the transportation sector include electrification, switching to lower carbon fuels, ~~and~~ reducing travel demand, and promoting alternative multimodal transportation and infrastructure. To lower transportation emissions, Whatcom County is evaluating land use planning practices to lower per capita VMT, promote taking fewer trips and assessing regional investments in public transit and multimodal transportation. Improving active transportation options and multimodal connectivity for all residents reduces emissions, improves public health, and advances equity.	Galloway	
14	12-12	Policy 12.8.3	Coordinate with WSDOT, Whatcom Council of Governments, tribes, and cities to update the regional transportation plan to estimate and track transportation related greenhouse gas emissions by jurisdiction in Whatcom County.	Galloway	
15	12-12	Policy 12.8.6	Collaborate with regional partners to facilitate and invest in the development and installation of a countywide electric vehicle (EV) ~~infrastructure across Whatcom County~~charging network, including prioritizing underserved and disadvantaged communities to ensure equitable access.	Galloway	
16	12-13	Policy 12.8.14	Review bidding and procurement policies to prioritize lower-carbon materials and processes in County funded transportation and infrastructure projects.	Galloway	
17	12-15	Policy 12.11.3	Review Whatcom County code for opportunities to discourage conversion of forestland for non-forestry uses and agriculture land for non-agriculture uses.	Galloway	
18	12-16	NEW Policy 12.11.7	Policy 12.11.7: Work with the State and tribes to evaluate a framework and strategy for achieving net ecological gain of salmon and other aquatic species habitat for all public projects and a voluntary incentive driven framework and strategy for private projects. *Note: consistent with RES2022-036*	Galloway	

19	12-17	Agriculture and Food Systems	Higher air temperatures, more days with extreme heat, flooding, and drought are expected to disrupt water availability and intensify stress on crops and livestock, undermining sustainability and reducing yields. More extreme precipitation and shifts in snowpack and stream flows will alter seasonal water availability for irrigation and drive changes to agricultural practices. As weather becomes less predictable, and suitable seasonal windows for planting and cultivation shift, producers may need to adopt climate-adaptive agricultural practices, including regenerative agriculture, modified crop and livestock selection, soil carbon enhancement, and water conservation.	Galloway	
20	12-20	Policy 12.13.4	Evaluate~~Require~~ the installation of distributed generation systems, such as solar with energy storage and microgrids, or thermal energy networks, in new County-owned critical facilities ~~(e.g., emergency management centers, essential public infrastructure, and County facilities)~~ to ensure energy availability during power outages ~~for County owned critical facilities~~. *Note: See comment letter from Cascade Natural Gas*	PUBLIC WORKS	
21	12-20	Policy 12.13.8	Prioritize relocation or retrofitting of essential infrastructure, including undergrounding utilities such as electrical lines, communication cables, water pipelines, and gas pipelines, in high-risk wildfire zones to enhance safety and recovery capabilities.	Galloway	
22	12-21	NEW Policy 12.13.16	Policy 12.13.16: Coordinate with utility providers to identify safe, feasible adaptation measures (e.g. elevated piping, reinforced casing, floodproofing) in floodplains, consistent with state pipeline safety standards. *Note: See comment letter from Cascade Natural Gas*	PUBLIC WORKS	
23	12-22	Policy 12.14.4	Evaluate the vulnerability and sensitivity of culturally significant roads, trails, and landscape features prone to damage or alteration from climate change.	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 10/7/25 COTW
24	12-22	Economic Development	Due to climate change, the regional economy risks employment disruption, supply chain challenges, and decreased productivity in key sectors such as the manufacturing, construction, transportation, energy, maritime, tourism, agriculture, and forestry sectors, and reduced recreation opportunities. Whatcom County is expected to experience increasing costs related to relocation and damage to property and infrastructure due to coastal and riverine flooding, in addition to production losses due to extreme heat, drought, wildfire, and ocean acidification. There is expected to be increasing price volatility for business inputs, loss of operational continuity,	Galloway	

			shifts in resource availability, ~~shipping~~ transportation disruptions, and increased unavailability of insurance in some areas.		
25	12-23	Policy 12.15.7	Develop economic innovation strategies to minimize workforce displacement and supply chain disruptions caused by climate-related impacts on key industries.	Galloway	
26	12-24	Policy 12.16.8	Promote ecosystem restoration and protection projects that prioritize the recovery of habitats for critical endangered, threatened, and priority fish and wildlife species.	Galloway	
27	12-24	Emergency Management	Climate hazards such as drought, extreme weather events~~temperature fluctuations~~, wildfire, and flooding are expected to increase costs and demands for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery services, and could strain or overwhelm local emergency response capacity. These climate risks include increased demand for shelter, damaged buildings and infrastructure, additional pressure on energy grids and communications systems, and disruption to emergency management facilities, medical services, and critical equipment and supplies due to impossible or unsafe travel conditions and the potential magnitude of emergency events.	Galloway	
28	12-25	Policy 12.17.7	Increase community awareness and preparedness for climate-related emergencies by conducting regular tests of evacuation and other emergency alerts and providing accessible public information, including in multiple languages.	Galloway	
29	12-26	NEW Policy 12.17.14	Policy 12.17.14: Assess potential ferry service disruptions and create plans to maintain ferry reliability during extreme weather events.	Galloway	
30	12-26	NEW Policy 12.17.15	Policy 12.17.15: Coordinate with Fire Departments, Fire Districts, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement, and other first responders to ensure timely and unified emergency response, minimize disruption of services, and support workplace safety and volunteer and professional workforce protection.	Galloway	
31	12-27	Policy 12.18.6	Establish contingency plans and train to execute them with community partners for maintaining critical health services, including mobile health units, ~~and~~ telemedicine, and Fire/EMS response and transport, during extreme weather events and infrastructure failures.	Galloway	
32	12-28	Transportation	Climate change is expected to adversely impact transportation infrastructure, including increased road surface damage from higher temperatures~~,~~ and additional maintenance requirements for roadside vegetation and infrastructure damage from rain, freeze, and thaw cycles. Increasing temperatures and flooding may cause road closures, delays in ferry, transit, and air travel ~~delays~~, and risks to routes, roads, bridges, sidewalks, trails, rail, and airport infrastructure.	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 10/7/25 COTW