

Whatcom County Council Public Works & Health Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

11 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 11:45 A.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 Elizabeth Boyle called the meeting to order at 11 a.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

Special Presentation

2. [AB2026-150](#) Update from Health and Community Services department staff regarding the status of allocating up to \$750,000 from the Healthy Children's Fund for disaster assistance for vulnerable families with children

Clerk's note: Boyle switched the order of the first two agenda items.

Sarah Simpson, Health and Community Services, updated the councilmembers on the funding allocation for storm recovery for families in the area of the Nooksack River. She spoke about an expedited request for proposal (RFP) process that they have in place in order to get proposals in within the first week, so they could move resources out as quickly as possible. She answered who makes the decision on who will get rewarded the money, and stated it is the same people who helped create the application. She answered how much of the funding they expect to be taken up with the first two applications they are going forward with, if there are any gaps in types of families being served, what the deadline is for applications, and when they will make decisions. She stated they are working with a rolling deadline so they could start reviewing applications immediately. The first deadline was after one week, and future deadlines will be in one-week increments after that for several weeks through February.

Ann Beck, Health and Community Services, answered when the first family might see the support, and stated since all of this was put out during an emergency declaration period they do not have to follow the usual protocols, but it is the first time that money has gone towards emergency response in this way. She thinks they could work on getting contracts written up in the next week or two, but then it depends on timelines for legal and executive review, and for the Finance and Administrative Services Department.

Simpson and Beck answered where people can go to see the information on the application process, and stated it might be on the main Healthy Children's Fund page and on the North Sound Accountable Community of Health (North Sound ACH) community hub.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

1. [AB2026-149](#) Update from Public Works Department director regarding flood response activities
Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, briefed the Councilmembers on the February 2nd Floodplain Integrated Planning (FLIP) team meeting, and stated she will send them an email with a summary of the brief. The purpose of the FLIP meeting was to review the Nooksack River Integrated Floodplain Action Plan (or Integrated Action Plan). She answered whether the action plan will be online and stated she is not sure when, but will update them on that.

Scanlon stated he is curious to know if any of our potential future infrastructure needs (such as ring dikes) align with cities' plans for UGAs and UGA reserves, and stated he believes it is really important to make sure that we are aligning those plans with the flood mitigation plans.

Kosa answered if there is a breakdown of the phases for when they are going from planning to actually implementing the plan, and stated it is a little too early and depends on who makes the decisions. They will present information to the decision-makers to see if options before them are palatable or if the scope needs to be changed, so having those answers to Council is contingent on getting approval toward the next step.

Stremmer stated he would like Public Works to make it public who (which organizations) are involved in the FLIP process.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-129](#) Resolution requesting Washington State officials and Whatcom County's Congressional delegation work to secure the release of approved Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds for Whatcom County homeowners
Julie Anderson, Public Works Department, stated they have two Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) grants that have been awarded, and they have been working to spend those down. They also have an elevation grant and an acquisition grant that have been awaiting award and obligation since the summer. The County submitted its final applications and those were

submitted to FEMA. FEMA had to then forward everything to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) secretary for approval and that is what has been taking the most amount of time and where it has been stalled for the past six months. So, this resolution helps to highlight that Whatcom and Washington Emergency Management Division (WEMD) have done everything they can and that the ball is actually sitting with DHS and FEMA.

Boyle thanked Elliot Sweeney who was the initiator of this and brought it to the Council's attention.

Galloway moved and Scanlon seconded that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

Scanlon stated he reached out to our congressional delegation and the Governor's Office to see if they have any other ideas for how to get this off the Secretary of Homeland Security's desk. He will let them know if he hears anything back.

Galloway stated demonstrating the statewide impact of these sorts of things can go a long way.

Rienstra stated she has learned from constituents that the funding for recovery from the 2021 flooding that did not come through would have prevented the recurrent damage that they have seen from the 2025 flood. It shows how important it is to continue to push for this and future funding so it is not continuing to compound the harm and trauma.

Galloway's motion that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Elizabeth Boyle-via email 2/23/2026

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Elizabeth Boyle, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE