

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, April 29, 2025

11:45 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 12:00 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 11:54 a.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 Stremmler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2025-219](#) Report from the Planning and Development Services Department
Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, reported and answered questions.

Permitting

He gave an overview on permitting and stated that permit and land use application numbers remain steady. He spoke about implementing the new permit review timeline code changes from Senate Bill (SB) 5290 and spoke about internal process adjustments that staff and the office have been making, including amending their open hours for the public. He spoke about the public civic access portal which allows the development community and the public to apply for permits online, and he updated on the Birch Bay incorporation feasibility study, and a multi-family project proposal with Horizons at Semiahmoo.

Comprehensive Plan

He spoke about the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being published tomorrow, the next Growth Management Act (GMA) elected officials meeting on May 21st, and incorporating public input into each of the twelve elements of the Comprehensive Plan. He spoke about the Comprehensive Plan update and the desire to have a sequential review process, so that when they bring an element to the Planning Commission, they will bring the same chapter to the Council shortly thereafter, and he discussed some options with the councilmembers.

He answered how many FTEs they have budgeted versus how many they have on the ground, and stated they have two open positions. He described those and stated they do not plan on filling the Natural Resources Division Manager position at this time.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, spoke about the vacant positions and thanked the Planning Department for changing their public office hours to address the new level of service requirements without adding additional staff.

Elenbaas spoke about his concern with not filling staff roles that need to be filled and whether it will be a budget efficiency in the long run.

Personius stated they will see some significant proposed policy changes in this Comprehensive Plan update for things such as water resource management, affordable housing, land use, transportation, and floodplain management.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2025-282](#) Ordinance adopting amendments to Whatcom County Code Chapter 16.24, Commute Trip Reduction, and adopting the 2025-2029 Commute Trip Reduction Plan for Whatcom County

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, answered whether it is possible for the Council to make a recommendation on this since there is a public hearing tonight.

Councilmembers discussed not having had a chance to look at changes being proposed by public commenters, that there are discussions scheduled today in Committee of the Whole that address those comments, and that this is a separate topic.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, stated the Council had a work session on this two weeks ago and he briefed the councilmembers on the ordinance.

Scanlon stated he is inclined to not forward a recommendation on this from the committee since there is a public hearing this evening.

Councilmembers did not make a motion.

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 12:19 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Ben Elenbaas-via email 5/6/2025

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Ben Elenbaas, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

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