

Whatcom County Council Special Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

1 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW - HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30
P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA
REVISED 5.27.2026**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Elizabeth Boyle
Barry Buchanan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jessica Rienstra
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Vice Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.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

Public Comment (Comprehensive Plan)

1. [AB2026-422](#) Public comments on all items related to the draft Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan

The following people spoke:

- Ryan Bowman
- Lisa Adam
- Charlie Brown
- Bill Craven
- Bill Geyer
- Josephine Bond
- Peter Condyles
- Perry Eskridge

Hearing no one else, Scanlon closed public comment.

This agenda item was RECEIVED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-186](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2, Land Use

Scanlon introduced discussion of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2.

Rienstra moved to begin review of Chapter 2 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 168 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026, which adds Policy 2CC-19. He clarified that if there is no motion to amend, then Council will be preliminarily approving the text as is.

Boyle asked for Councilmember Elenbaas to explain the goal of the amendment.

Elenbaas stated that the amendment aims to provide greater permitting certainty.

Stremler moved to approve Item 168.

Kirsten Smith, Council Staff, clarified that councilmembers do not need to make motions to approve items, as they are considered part of the current working draft.

Stremler withdrew his motion.

Rienstra asked for clarification about permitting for modernization and reinvestment projects.

Elenbaas stated that permits are required for these projects.

Scanlon asked whether the policy would require anything be docketed.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director, stated that the policy just informs and affirms the code that Council already adopted with the 2021 Cherry Point amendments.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated that there was a limit for conditional use permits if the project is more than \$5 million.

Personius stated that that provision is in the major project permit provision, which triggers an environmental impact statement (EIS). He said most safety and environmental improvements made by refineries are covered in the existing code. Expansion of capacity is what triggers a conditional use permit.

Councilmembers continued to discuss Policy 2CC-19.

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 169, which adds Policy 2CC-20. He asked whether the policy would change any current practices around storage tanks.

Elenbaas provided information about the intent of Policy 2CC-20.

Personius stated that this policy supports existing code requirements for storage tanks.

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 170, which adds Policy 2CC-21.

Elenbaas provided information about the intention of Policy 2CC-21.

Sidhu stated that the point of capacity limitations is to not increase greenhouse gases or sulfur.

Elenbaas stated that when you make diesel fuel out of fossil fuel feedstock, a certain size of reactor is required to remove impurities with a volume of catalyst, which is usually a precious metal. He said that it would appear that bio fuels are cleaner than fossil fuel; however, they are harder to hydro treat, and a larger reactor or heater might be required.

Scanlon asked what would change if the policy is adopted.

Personius stated that the item provides a policy rationale for current code, which is helpful in determining whether a permit meets the intent of the code.

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 171, which adds a new policy to Chapter 2.

Elenbaas stated that the proposed amendment aims to provide a pathway for new types of renewable energy generation and storage projects where appropriate.

Scanlon stated that the Public Utilities District (PUD) recommended changing "renewable" to "non-carbon resource."

Elenbaas amended his proposal to include "non-carbon or renewable resource," so that the proposed policy reads:

The County may adopt or amend land use designations, zoning classifications, development regulations, conditional use procedures, performance standards, or other implementing regulations to accommodate non-carbon or renewable resource energy generation, storage, transmission, and related infrastructure, including location-dependent energy resources where appropriate and consistent with environmental review, public safety, and resource protection goals.

Scanlon asked where the policy should be placed.

Personius suggested adding it to Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5 Utilities.

Elenbaas stated he wants the policy to be about county land use, which is why he initially thought it should fit into Chapter 2 Land Use.

Personius stated that the policy could be placed in multiple chapters. He suggested Council provisionally approve the policy so that PDS staff can find the best place for it.

Councilmembers continued to discuss placement of the proposed policy.

Elenbaas moved to amend Item 171 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) as presented and assign it a place in the Comprehensive Plan per PDS staff's recommendation, to be determined.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 172, which would add a new policy.

Elenbaas amended the proposal so that it reads as follows:

Non-carbon or renewable resource energy generation, storage, transmission, and supporting utility infrastructure may serve essential public functions and should not be categorically precluded from consideration within the County where impacts can be appropriately mitigated.

Elenbaas moved to include Item 172 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) as presented (on screen) to be placed pursuant to PDS staff's recommended placement, to be determined.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Boyle stated that she has an amendment she would like to make, which aligns with amendments proposed by the business community. She asked when it should be considered.

Scanlon stated that the business community submitted 151 potential amendments. He stated that Council will discuss the schedule later in the agenda, including potentially adding a new meeting date.

Kiana Oos, Council Staff, stated that agenda items would be due Monday, June 8 in order for the public to have time to review them.

Boyle suggested returning to the 151 proposed amendments if there is time leftover in today's meeting.

Scanlon asked about holding the chapter open.

Kirsten Smith, Council Staff, stated that they could vote to hold the chapter as amended open.

Scanlon moved to hold Chapter 2 as amended open until the next meeting.

Boyle seconded the motion.

Councilmembers continued to discuss the schedule.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, stated that Galloway confirmed that June 16 would work for an additional Special Committee of the Whole meeting.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Halka asked for clarification about the date.

Scanlon moved to reconsider the previous motion.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Scanlon moved to hold Chapter 2 as amended open until a future meeting.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 2 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Item 171 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) as amended and assign it a place in the Comprehensive Plan per PDS staff's recommendation, to be determined.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to include Item 172 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) as presented to be placed pursuant to PDS staff's recommended placement, to be determined.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 2 as amended open until the next meeting.

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to reconsider the previous motion.

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 2 as amended open until a future meeting.

2. [AB2026-217](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5, Utilities

Scanlon introduced discussion of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5 Utilities.

Boyle moved to begin review of Chapter 5 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

Stremmler seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremmler

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Scanlon turned discussion to Items 31 through 34 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director, suggested adding the Items 171 and 172 from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for Chapter 2 in Chapter 5 under Goal 5H. He stated that Council could also add Items 31 through 34 from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for Chapter 5 under Goal 5H as Policies 5H-11 through 5H-14.

Elenbaas provided an overview of the policies' intent.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, asked a question about battery storage.

Scanlon stated that there was a previously amended item in 5H-4, which encouraged support for low-carbon or renewable energy projects including anaerobic digesters, solar, battery energy storage systems, etc. He suggested incorporating "non-carbon or" after "renewable" in Policy 5H-11 (Item 31) so that it reads:

Support reliable, affordable, resilient, and environmentally responsible energy systems, including renewable, non-carbon or low-carbon, and emerging energy technologies, while ensuring appropriate protection of natural resources, treaty rights, cultural resources, public safety, and rural character.

Elenbaas accepted the suggestion as a friendly amendment to the proposed policy.

In Policy 5H-13 (Item 33), Scanlon suggested adding “non-carbon or” before “renewable energy sources” so that the policy reads as follows:

Recognize that certain non-carbon or renewable energy resources, including geothermal resources, may be geographically constrained and may require case-specific siting considerations based on geology, thermal resource location, transmission availability, environmental constraints, and public safety considerations.

Elenbaas accepted the suggestion as a friendly amendment to the proposed policy.

In Policy 5H-14 (Item 34), Scanlon suggested adding “non-carbon,” so the policy reads as follows:

The County should periodically evaluate and update development regulations, permitting procedures, definitions, and environmental review processes related to non-carbon, renewable, and emerging energy technologies to ensure regulations remain effective, scientifically informed, and consistent with state law, technological advances, and regional energy needs.

Elenbaas accepted the suggestion as a friendly amendment to the proposed policy.

Elenbaas moved to include Items 31-34 as presented on screen.

Stremmer seconded the motion.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Rienstra suggested changing "periodically evaluate" in Policy 5H-14 to "should evaluate."

Scanlon stated that there are some periodic updates currently in place for other items, so this could be similar.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

Out of Meeting: 1 - Galloway

Personius stated that Council could consider putting Items 171 and 172 from the Chart of Proposed Council Amendments for Chapter 2 in Chapter 5 Goal 5H. He said it would be easy for people to find if all the related policies are located together.

Scanlon asked if there would be differences in how the policy is applied depending on what chapter it is in.

Personius said that there is no difference.

Councilmembers continued to discuss placement of the items.

Elenbaas moved to add Items 171 and 172 (from the Chapter 2 Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) to Chapter 5 Utilities under Goal 5H as Policy 5H-15 and Policy 5H-16.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Councilmembers discussed whether there are any other proposed amendments to Chapter 5.

Scanlon moved to request staff prepare Chapter 5 - Preliminary Council Draft as amended on June 2, 2026 for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

Galloway seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 5 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Items 31-34 as presented on screen.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to add Items 171 and 172 (from the Chapter 2 Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) to Chapter 5 Utilities under Goal 5H as Policy 5H-15 and Policy 5H-16.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to request staff prepare Chapter 5 - Preliminary Council Draft as amended on June 2, 2026 for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

3. [AB2026-250](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8, Resource Lands

Scanlon introduced discussion of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8 Resource Lands.

Boyle moved to begin review of Chapter 8 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

Stremmler seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon introduced discussion of Item 99 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026, which adds a new policy.

Elenbaas provided background on the purpose of the new policy, which he said would be to provide enabling language that provides guardrails for limited siting of renewable energy facilities. He amended the proposed policy to add “non-carbon or” so that the policy reads as follows:

The County may consider limited siting of non-carbon or renewable energy facilities...

Elenbaas asked for clarification about the potential impacts of the policy.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director, stated that the policy gives some flexibility and discretion for how staff could craft those regulations.

Elenbaas asked if he should remove "location is dependent on the underlying resource."

Personius stated that it might be true for geothermal but not necessarily solar or wind. He suggested changing "is dependent" to "may be dependent."

Elenbaas accepted the suggestion as a friendly amendment to the proposed policy. He asked where they should place the proposed policy.

Personius stated that he does not have a recommendation. He said that most other counties facing these questions have encountered issues with locating solar arrays and wind farms on agricultural lands.

Elenbaas stated that the high cost of agricultural land in Whatcom County would likely stop the location of solar or wind farms on those lands. He said the policy could apply to commercial forestry or agricultural lands.

Lauren Clemens, Public Works, stated that there is a section toward the end of the chapter that is specific to climate and HB1181 where the policy might fit.

Elenbaas suggested locating the new policy as amended as 8Y-6.

Rienstra stated that she does not see most of the bullet points as optional.

Elenbaas said he agrees.

Elenbaas moved to approve Policy 8Y-6 (Item 99 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) as amended and presented on screen.

Boyle seconded the motion.

Boyle suggested adding "when all the following conditions are met" before the list.

Elenbaas accepted the suggestion as a friendly amendment.

Personius stated that he thinks the language is fine. He said that Council has already docketed amendments for solar, geothermal, and hydrogen, and this policy language will provide guidance for when they approach that work.

Elenbaas stated that he wants for there to be guardrails, but he does not want the policy to be so prescriptive that it stops any consideration of a project.

Scanlon asked how the PDS team would treat an application for a non-carbon or renewable energy facility on or near a resource land.

Personius stated that if there are no regulations or that particular use, policy in the Comprehensive Plan would provide guidance.

Councilmembers continued to discuss the proposed policy.

Eddy Ury, Whatcom Public Utility District (PUD) commissioner, provided information about the proposed policy and consideration of proposed new powerlines. He suggested softening the second bullet point to read "alternative locations may not be feasible."

Elenbaas amended his motion to incorporate the suggested amendment so that the policy reads as follows:

The County may consider limited siting of non-carbon or renewable energy facilities or associated infrastructure on or near designated resource lands when all the following conditions are met:

- the location may be dependent upon the underlying resource,
- alternative locations may not be feasible,
- impacts to long-term commercial resource use are minimized,
- environmental impacts are mitigated,
- and the proposal is consistent with applicable state and federal law.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon turned discussion to Items 100, 101, and 102, which are PDS recommendations that are already incorporated into the draft under consideration and, as such, do not require a motion.

Matt Aamot, PDS, stated that there is a problem with the citation in Item

100 (Policy 8A-6) and the citation should read as follows: WAC 365-196-310(5)(e)(v).

Rienstra asked for clarification about staff's recommended change to Policy 8A-15.

Personius stated that they have been working with staff from Nooksack and Sumas on Policy 8A-15 regarding mitigation required for the de-designation of agricultural resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

Councilmembers discussed mitigation requirements with Director Personius.

Rollin Harper, city planner for the small cities, stated that there are multiple competing interests that have to be balanced, but the proposal they have worked on with county staff seems reasonable.

Elenbaas stated that the policy assumes that people want to be part of the UGA, but that might not always be the case. He stated that there is also an assumption that buying development rights is beneficial to long-term agricultural viability, but that is not always the case because banks don't want to lend on land that doesn't have development rights.

Scanlon suggested revisiting this item at a future meeting.

Harper stated that the policy is voluntary, as property owners are able to decide whether they want to be annexed into the city and if and when they want to develop.

Councilmembers continued to discuss the proposed policy regarding mitigation.

Scanlon asked a question about the change in the number of days to record the covenant with the Auditor following approval of de-designation.

Personius stated that Growth Hearings Board decisions have to be appealed within 30 days, so they wanted to give a little bit of extra time before those covenant agreements would have to be recorded with the county auditor in case of an appeal.

Aamot stated that the parties of record would have 60 days to appeal the ordinance to the Growth Hearings Board, so this would give the landowner

30 days after that. It would make sure that the UGA expansion was approved before an agreement is signed.

Scanlon moved to hold Chapter 8 as amended open until a future meeting.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

Kiana Oos, Council Staff, asked whether Items 100-102 should be considered preliminarily approved.

Scanlon said yes, as approved.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

Abstain: 1 - Galloway

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 8 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to approve Policy 8Y-6 (Item 99 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) as amended and presented on screen so that the policy reads as follows:

The County may consider limited siting of non-carbon or renewable energy facilities or associated infrastructure on or near designated resource lands when all the following conditions are met:

- the location may be dependent upon the underlying resource,
- alternative locations may not be feasible,
- impacts to long-term commercial resource use are minimized,
- environmental impacts are mitigated,
- and the proposal is consistent with applicable state and federal law.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 8 as amended open until a future meeting.

4. [AB2026-261](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10, Environment

Scanlon introduced discussion of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10 Environment.

Boyle moved to begin review of Chapter 10 using the Preliminary Council

Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

Stremmler seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon turned discussion to Item 83 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026, which would add a new policy to Chapter 10.

Elenbaas stated that he does not know where the policy should go in the chapter.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director, suggested that it could be added to 5H. He stated that Council could preliminarily approve the amendment and give PDS time to find a good location for it.

Elenbaas moved to include Item 83 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) in a location to be determined by PDS.

Boyle seconded the motion.

Eddy Ury, Whatcom Public Utilities District (PUD) commissioner, stated that the language could be applied in a way that could be discouraging for renewable energy development, but that might already be the case without the new policy. He said placement and context of the policy could determine its impact.

Elenbaas amended his motion to add "non-carbon" and "where feasible" to the policy so that it reads as follows:

Non-carbon, renewable energy, and geothermal development should avoid, where feasible, to minimize and mitigate significant impacts to:

- groundwater resources,
- instream flows,
- geologic stability,

- volcanic hazards,
- fish and wildlife habitat,
- treaty-protected resources,
- cultural and archaeological sites,
- critical areas.

Site-specific studies, monitoring, adaptive management, and reclamation requirements may be required where appropriate.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremmler

Nay: 0

Abstain: 1 - Rienstra

Scanlon moved to hold Chapter 10 as amended open until a future meeting.

Stremmler seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Stremmler

Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 10 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Item 83 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026) as amended in a location to be determined by PDS.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 10 as amended open until a future meeting.

5. [AB2026-419](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Rural Lands Zoning Map amendments

Scanlon introduced discussion of Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Rural Lands Zoning Map amendments.

Boyle moved to begin review of the draft ordinance of the Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Rural Lands Zoning Map using the Planning Commission recommendations from April 23, 2026.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

Maddie Schacht, Planning and Development Services (PDS), stated that the zoning map amendments align with Council's most up-to-date preliminary approvals of UGA boundaries and other Comprehensive Plan designations. She provided a high-level overview of rezone proposals.

Scanlon asked which items are included.

Schacht stated that all amendments are up for review, including the Bellingham UGA which did not have a consensus.

Scanlon asked whether the amendments are considered included or whether motions need to be made to incorporate them into the draft.

Kiana Oos, Council Staff, asked for clarification about the amendments.

Schacht stated that Planning Commission and PDS recommendations are the same except for the Bellingham Urban Growth Area-related zoning map amendments, which did not have a consensus from Planning Commission.

Stremmer asked for more information about Planning Commission's lack of consensus related to the Bellingham UGA.

Schacht stated that there were a number of topics that Planning Commission grappled with in regard to the Bellingham UGA, including light industrial area and rural area rezoning.

Mark Personius, PDS Director, stated that a primary concern was related to City of Bellingham's de-designation of the Geneva neighborhood, which would revert to R5 zoning. He said there was also discussion regarding Yew Street and whether it should be in UGA or UGA Reserve.

Scanlon asked if the ordinance aligns with what the City of Bellingham has done in their own Comprehensive Plan.

Chris Behee, City of Bellingham, stated that the proposal aligns with what Bellingham City Council approved in December.

Stremmer asked a question about the Yew Street area.

Behee stated that Yew Street was included in the original UGA in the

mid-1990s, and it was removed following an update to the county's Comprehensive Plan and based on land capacity needs and water quality in Lake Padden. It has been in reserve status since around 2009.

Councilmembers continued to discuss Yew Street zoning with Chris Behee.

Elenbaas asked about the Everson UGA.

Matt Aamot, PDS, stated that mitigation policy 8A-15 would not require mitigation for Everson, as they are adding 34 acres to the UGA from agriculture, but they are also designating 60 acres from UGA and UGA reserve to agriculture.

Elenbaas asked if Sumas, Everson, or Nooksack could swap.

Aamot said that is not how the policy is currently envisioned.

The motion to begin review carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon moved to request that staff prepare the draft ordinance of the UGA and Rural Lands Zoning Map amendments - Preliminary Council Draft as amended - for Council introduction and public hearing.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 1 - Elenbaas

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of the draft ordinance of the Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Rural Lands Zoning Map using the Planning Commission recommendations from April 23, 2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to request that staff prepare the draft ordinance the UGA and Rural Lands Zoning Map amendments – Preliminary Council Draft as amended – for Council introduction and public hearing.

Items Added by Revision

1. [AB2026-188](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive

Plan Chapter 3, Housing

Scanlon introduced discussion of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 3 Housing.

Scanlon moved to begin review of Chapter 3 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon moved to approve changes to the Housing Needs Table in Chapter 3 as recommended by Planning Commission.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services (PDS), provided an overview of the proposed changes.

Scanlon asked if the capacity is present in what has already been approved for Birch Bay.

Aamot stated that, in Birch Bay, one of the zoning changes was modifying the urban residential four dwelling unit per acre zone to allow duplex, triplex, and fourplexes. Currently, it only allows single family housing, so there will be increased capacity in Birch Bay for those units.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon moved to hold Chapter 3 as amended open until a future meeting.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Stremler
Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 3 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to approve changes to the Housing Needs Table in Chapter 3 as recommended by Planning Commission.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 3 as amended open until a future meeting.

2. [AB2026-263](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Appendices (Appendix A: Glossary, Appendix B: Acronyms, Appendix D: Bibliography, Appendix E: 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan, Appendix G: Airport Overlay Zones, Appendix H: Airport Imaginary Surfaces, Appendix I: Housing Needs Analysis, Appendix J: Subsidized Housing Needs and Funding) and Foothills Subarea Plan Amendments

Scanlon introduced discussion of the Comprehensive Plan Appendices.

Scanlon moved to begin review of Appendix I - Housing Needs Analysis (as updated 5.20.2026), which is the current version of Appendix I with additional edits by PDS as approved by the Planning Commission.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and Stremler
Nay: 0

Scanlon moved to amend Appendix I by replacing the version from March 30, 2026 with the version updated on May 20, 2026.

Boyle seconded the motion.

Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services (PDS), provided an overview of the updates.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and
Stremler
Nay: 0

Scanlon moved to request that staff prepare all Appendices, including Appendix I as amended on June 2, 2026, for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

Boyle seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and
Stremler
Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Appendix I - Housing Needs Analysis (as updated 5.20.2026), which is the current version of Appendix I with additional edits by PDS as approved by the Planning Commission.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to amend Appendix I by replacing the version from March 30, 2026 with the version updated on May 20, 2026.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to request that staff prepare all Appendices, including Appendix I as amended on June 2, 2026, for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

3. [AB2026-231](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 7, Economic Development

Scanlon introduced discussion of the remaining Comprehensive Plan update schedule. He proposed adding a new meeting on June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for discussion of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Kiana Oos, Council Staff, stated that review of the findings of fact may need to be moved from June 9 because of changes resulting from amendments to the chapters. Zoning code amendments will remain on the schedule for June 9.

Scanlon moved to add a Special Committee of the Whole meeting on June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Scanlon stated that this would push introduction of the Comprehensive Plan ordinance back to June 23 and the public hearing to July 14.

Boyle moved to add Chapter 12 to discussion on June 16 for Special Committee of the Whole.

Scanlon seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 7 using the Preliminary Council Draft for 6.2.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026, additional edits proposed and motions passed by councilmembers, and additional edits by PDS as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 6.2.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 7 as amended open until a future meeting.

4. [AB2026-249](#) Discussion regarding schedule for Council review of the comprehensive plan update

Scanlon introduced discussion of the remaining Comprehensive Plan update schedule. He proposed adding a new meeting on June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for discussion of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Kiana Oos, Council Staff, stated that review of the findings of fact may need to be moved from June 9 because they may change depending on edits to chapters. Zoning code amendments will remain on the schedule for June 9.

Scanlon moved to add a Special Committee of the Whole meeting on June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Rienstra seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and
Stremler
Nay: 0

Scanlon stated that this would push introduction of the comp plan ordinance
to the June 23 and the public hearing to July 14.

Boyle made a motion to add Chapter 12 to discussion on June 16 for
Special Committee of the Whole.

Scanlon seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:
Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, Elenbaas, and
Stremler
Nay: 0

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

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to add a Special Committee of the Whole meeting on June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00
p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to add Chapter 12 to discussion on June 16 for Special Committee of the Whole.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Jenna Gernand

