

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

1:25 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 2:55 P.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
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremmer

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmer

Announcements**Special Presentation**

1. [AB2025-383](#) Presentation by the Forest Resilience Task Force regarding the Forest Resilience Plan
Melanie del Rosario, Triangle Associates, read from a presentation (on file)
and the following people also spoke:

- Brandy Reed, Forest Resilience Task Force
- Stevan Harrell, Forest Resilience Task Force
- Ellyn Murphy, Forest Resilience Task Force
- Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office

They and councilmembers discussed whether the goal for the Forest Resilience Plan is to address county-owned or county-managed forests only or whether it applies county-wide, that the plan addresses different forest owners in different ways but could be prescriptive for county-owned lands, whether the Forest Advisory Committee has been involved up to this point or just now that the plan has gone to them, that they have known about it all along but not taken action on it until recently, that there were two Forest Advisory Committee members serving on the Forest Resilience Task Force but who were no longer able to participate, that there is a sunset to the task force at the end of the year, whether land use elements in the plan will come in time to inform the Comprehensive Plan update, and that they may be able to reference the Forest Resilience Plan in the Comprehensive Plan.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2025-529](#) Presentation from Health and Community Services on Wiser Lake Cyanobacteria Management Plan

The following people read from a presentation (on file) regarding harmful algae blooms (HABs) and Wiser Lake, the Health Department HAB program, the development of a Lake Cyanobacteria Management Plan, short- and long-term options to control and change the water quality, and next steps, and they answered questions:

- Anna Mostovetsky, Health and Community Services
- Josh Leinbach, Health and Community Services

They answered why Council should act on this since the lake is not a drinking water source, and stated it is used for recreational purposes and there is still an opportunity for exposure for humans and animals. They answered how they create a plan that would mitigate the harmful effects of this algae if ducks are not acknowledged in the plan as the true source of it, that waterfowl counts were a major piece of the data collection process but that the consultants did not want to lean on data that was maybe not a very reliable source, that Silver Lake has similar issues but does not have a lot of agricultural run-off so it may highlight that there should be more focus on the problem of waterfowl as opposed to agriculture, what the impact might be of having a busy state highway nearby, that it is up to the community if they want to form a lake association but that a lake management district would involve the County and could be initiated in a couple different ways, whether there is anyone on their team (Health) who is going to work with the community to assess those options, that this item is coming from Health and Community Services (and not Public Works) because harmful algae blooms are a health issue, whether there is a cost estimate for treatments of the lake or associated with the lake management plan, and that more monitoring would be needed to determine whether an oxygenation machine creating artificial circulation would be useful.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-504](#) Discussion on Health Board structure

Scanlon stated the idea with this item is to introduce some concepts to councilmembers today and then come back to it at the Health Board meeting in a week to see if the Council wants to suggest a direction. He read from the "Overview and sample tables" (on file) on why they would consider changing the structure of the Health Board, the work they have done on this topic leading up to this, the State laws they would have to comply with if they make a change, and four different options for the Council/Health Board to consider.

Donovan stated this report is in response to a request made (**AB2025-274**) in the April Health Board/Public Health Advisory Board meeting (that they form a new workgroup to come up with some options and further recommendations to the Board of Health), and he spoke about the Health Board's narrowly defined duties in Revised Code of Washington (RCW)

70.05.060 which are separate from the County Council's.

Scanlon stated a change to the board would require a change in Whatcom County Code 24.01.

Donovan stated if they make a change they cannot change it back to just being the seven-member board.

Councilmembers discussed how other counties coordinate legislative instruments (ordinances, or things that involve funding) in which the Council and executive would have some interest, that they would have very clear code which outlines what would be under the Health Board's jurisdiction, that Council would remain in control of the budget and would remain the appointing body for the director of the department, that the group did a good job in doing its due diligence on this topic, whether the group reached out to the two tribes to ask if they are interested in being a part of this or whether the tribes have stated they want to be a part of the Health Board, and that the tribes were active in lobbying to change the State law to have each tribe in a county included rather than just one as was in the previous law.

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 2:56 p.m.

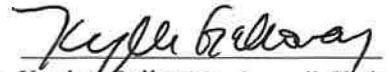
The County Council approved these minutes on September 9, 2025.

ATTEST:



Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA


Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger