

Whatcom County Council Special Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

9 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - RECESS FOR LUNCH FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 1:00 P.M. -
ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.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 Stremmler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order**Roll Call**

Present: 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Announcements**Public Comment**

1. [AB2026-271](#) Public comments on the draft Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10 (Environment), Chapter 12 (Climate), Appendices, and Foothills Subarea Plan Amendments

RECEIVED

Committee Discussion

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

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to request staff prepare Chapter 5 – Preliminary Council Draft dated 4.7.2026 as amended for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

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

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to amend Policy 7A-15 (in the Preliminary Council Draft for 4.7.2026) along the lines of the text that Councilmember Galloway proposed so that it reads as follows:

Long term prosperity in Whatcom County depends on reliable access to water and fiscally responsible management of local resources. While adjudication may ultimately clarify legal rights, experience from other basins demonstrates that multi decade litigation can create uncertainty and imposes significant costs on water users and County government. The County should support a process and outcome that achieves water certainty faster, protects the economy, and relieves unnecessary strain on the County’s justice system and taxpayers.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to approve Policy 7A-15 as amended.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to approve Galloway's Policy 7A-16 (for inclusion in the Preliminary Council Draft) as presented so that it reads as follows:

Whatcom County supports adjudication or other negotiated or mediated water rights quantification and settlement process among all major water use sectors including but not limited to agricultural, municipal, industrial, tribal, and environmental. The County should provide leadership, facilitation, and technical support to help all parties reach consensus on allocation, mitigation, conservation measures, and long-term water solutions that sustain the county's economic base while protecting ecological resources.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to approve Galloway's Policy 7A-17 (for inclusion in the Preliminary Council Draft).

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to amend Elenbaas' Policy 7A-18 (in the Preliminary Council Draft for 4.7.2026) so that it reads as follows:

Recognizing that the State initiated the adjudication but does not fully fund its implementation, the County shall advocate for state reimbursement of adjudication-related costs including courtroom expansion, judicial staffing, administrative expenses, a negotiated or mediated water rights quantification and settlement process, and other ongoing expenditures.

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to approve Elenbaas' Policy 7A-18 (in the Preliminary Council Draft for 4.7.2026) as amended.

MOTION 7:

Motion approved to amend Galloway's Policy 7A-19 as follows:

Adjudication or other negotiated or mediated water rights quantification and settlement should be used as a vehicle to invest in local economic infrastructure including but not limited to water infrastructure, conveyance efficiency, and mitigation banking that benefits multiple sectors and offsets the costs of adjudication. The County shall seek state and federal partnership funding to implement such projects as part of any basin-wide agreement.

MOTION 8:

Motion approved to approve Galloway's Policy 7A-19 (for inclusion in the Preliminary Council Draft) as amended.

MOTION 9:

Motion approved to amend Elenbaas' Policy 7A-20 (in the Preliminary Council Draft for 4.7.2026) as follows:

Ensure that negotiated or mediated settlement frameworks explicitly address the water needs of all users acknowledging that stable water supply supports job creation, food security, and housing affordability. The County's facilitative efforts should aim to preserve the viability of existing farms while ensuring sufficient water resources for urban and rural housing consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals.

MOTION 10:

Motion approved to amend Elenbaas' Policy 7A-20 (in the Preliminary Council Draft for 4.7.2026) as follows:

Encourage that adjudication or other negotiated or mediated settlement frameworks explicitly address the water needs of all users acknowledging that stable water supply supports job creation, food security, and housing affordability. The County's facilitative efforts should aim to preserve the viability of existing farms while ensuring sufficient water resources for urban and rural housing consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals.

MOTION 11:

Motion approved to approve Elenbaas' Policy 7A-20 as amended.

MOTION 12:

Motion approved that Council agrees that the vote on Policy 7A-20 was according to Council's wishes.

MOTION 13:

Motion approved to request staff prepare Chapter 7 - Preliminary Council Draft as amended on April 7, 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

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to include Item 15 (from the Proposed Chart of Council Changes for 4.7.2026), Policy 8A-3 as presented with the addition of "as amended" after WAC 365.190 at the end of the first sentence of Item 15 the deletion of 8A-3(4)(d).

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to amend Item 34 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) so that the next to last sentence reads as follows:

Whatcom County will seek reimbursement from the State of Washington on all adjudication related expenses including courtroom expansion, judicial staffing, administrative expenses, a negotiated or mediated water rights quantification and settlement process, and other ongoing expenditures.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to include Item 34 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to include Item 35 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to strike reference to Chapter 10 in Policy 8F-3.

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to include Item 68 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) and substitute the language from PDS for item 7 as follows:

Consider the likelihood of impacts on health and habitat from potentially harmful minerals such as Naturally Occurring Asbestos, Radon, and Mercury when designating MRLs.

MOTION 7:

Motion approved to include Item 89 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 8:

Motion approved to include Item 90 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) with the addition of "nearby" before "farm workers and their families" in the final sentence so that it reads as follows:

Support the development of safe, affordable on-farm and near-farm housing for farmworkers and their families, and improve access to transportation and healthcare for both farmers and farmworkers in rural areas. Cities should plan for and remove barriers to more multifamily housing affordable to nearby farm workers and their families.

MOTION 9:

Motion approved to hold Items 91 and 92 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) until April 28 (to be discussed during Committee of the Whole).

MOTION 10:

Motion approved to include Item 93 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 11:

Motion approved to reconsider the previous vote (to approve Item 93).

MOTION 12:

Motion approved to amend Item 93 as follows:

Reduce land use conflicts between Whatcom County's agriculture and non-agricultural landowners, ensuring that agricultural and supportive land uses are prioritized on agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

MOTION 13:

Motion approved to include Item 93 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended.

MOTION 14:

Motion approved to hold Items 94 through 98 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) until April 28 (to be discussed in Committee of the Whole).

MOTION 15:

Motion approved to hold Chapter 8 open until April 28 (to be discussed in Committee of the Whole).

4. [AB2026-251](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 9, Parks and Recreation

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 9 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 4.7.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Item 2 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as presented with the addition of the following new final sentence: Work in partnership with tribes to identify where recreation can co-exist that could support cultural education, stewardship, and shared understanding.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to include Item 5 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended so that it strikes reference to Point Whitehorn.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to amend Policy 9E-5 to strike the word “ensure” and replace it with “encourage the management of” so that the policy reads as follows:

Recognizing the long historical use for shoreline recreation and boat launching, and the historical and cultural significance to the Lummi Nation of the area at the end of Gulf Road at Cherry Point, the County should work with Lummi Nation, DNR, and the industrial land owners in that area to encourage the management of ongoing recreational use of the shoreline in that area while permanently protecting the cultural and ecosystem significance of both the shoreline and the associated near upland areas.

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to add a new Policy 9A-14 to read as follows:

In partnership with Tribes, consider land back and/or co-management opportunities on county-owned or managed lands.

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to request staff prepare Chapter 9 - Preliminary Council Draft dated 4.7.2026 as amended for inclusion in a future agenda bill file for Council introduction and public hearing.

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

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 10 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 4.7.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Item 25 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended so that it states:

Consider adopting National Fire Protection Association wildfire safety construction standards for new construction in forested and wildfire hazard areas to reduce risk to current and future development and loss of life and property.

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to include Item 26 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to hold remaining (Chapter 10) items (Items 32, 36, 37, 38, 40 41, 42, 50, 56, 57, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, and 71 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) until April 14 or April 28.

6. [AB2026-262](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 12, Climate

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 12 Climate using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 4.7.2026, which is the Planning Commission version from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026 with separate consideration of items 5, 10, 12, 18, 19, 20, 22, and 29.

MOTION 2:

Motion approved to amend Item 5 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) to add "to monitor progress towards the" after "performance indicators" so that the first paragraph reads as follows:

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 to monitor progress towards the 2030 Climate Element implementation progress report:

MOTION 3:

Motion approved to amend Item 5 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) to add ", in partnership with the private sector and developers and subject to consumer demand and economic conditions" so that the third bullet point reads as follows:

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, in partnership with the private sector and developers and subject to consumer demand and economic conditions.

MOTION 4:

Motion approved to include Item 5 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended.

MOTION 5:

Motion approved to include Item 10 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 6:

Motion approved to include Item 12 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 7:

Motion approved to amend Policy 12.11.7 (Item 18 from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) and re-title it as a new Policy 12.16.9 that reads as follows:

Work with the State, Tribes, and other stakeholders to evaluate a voluntary, incentive-driven framework and strategy for achieving restoration and enhancement of salmon and other aquatic species habitat for public and private projects.

MOTION 8:

Motion approved to include Item 18 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended.

MOTION 9:

Motion approved to include Item 20 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026).

MOTION 10:

Motion approved to amend Item 22 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) to add "and franchisees" after "utility providers" so that the policy reads as follows:

Coordinate with utility providers and franchisees to identify safe, feasible adaptation measures (e.g. elevated piping, reinforced casing, floodproofing) in floodplains, consistent with state pipeline safety standards.

MOTION 11:

Motion approved to include Item 22 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 4.7.2026) as amended.

7. [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

DISCUSSED

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

DISCUSSED

9. [AB2026-276](#) Discussion of an ordinance submitting to the qualified voters of Whatcom County a proposition authorizing a sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent (0.1%) for criminal justice purposes, as authorized by RCW 82.14.345

DISCUSSED

Items Added by Revision

Other Business

Adjournment