



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2021-234

File ID:	AB2021-234	Version:	1	Status:	Approved
File Created:	04/06/2021	Entered by:	DBrown@co.whatcom.wa.us		
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Assigned to:	Council			Final Action:	04/06/2021
Agenda Date:	04/06/2021			Enactment #:	RES 2021-015

Primary Contact Email: DBrown@co.whatcom.wa.us

TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Resolution to review and enhance opportunities for public participation in Whatcom County

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

The Council received a request from the Planning Commission to review options to increase county-wide public participation opportunities. This resolution sets up first steps for reviewing current practices and identifying ideas for improvements.

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
04/06/2021	Council	APPROVED	
		Aye: 7	Browne, Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, and Kershner
		Nay: 0	
		Absent: 0	

Attachments: Proposed Resolution

1 PROPOSED BY: PLANNING COMMISSION

2 DRAFTED BY: DONOVAN

3 INTRODUCTION DATE: APRIL 6, 2021

4
5 RESOLUTION 2021- 015

6
7 TO REVIEW AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
8 WHATCOM COUNTY
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10 WHEREAS, A 2016 report by the County Council's Legislative Analyst found that
11 Whatcom County has over 40 active boards, committees and commissions; and
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13 WHEREAS, over 300 Whatcom County residents volunteer their time on boards and
14 committees that advise the County Executive and County Council; and,
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16 WHEREAS, the 2016 report determined that for most committees, it is difficult to
17 recruit members; and,
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19 WHEREAS, these boards and committees should provide a forum for residents to
20 interact with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,
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22 WHEREAS, County Council meetings should provide a forum for residents to interact
23 with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,
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25 WHEREAS; the Whatcom County Council and Executive rely on these boards and
26 committees for advice on policy; and,
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28 WHEREAS, it may be difficult for some members of the public to be aware of
29 matters that come before the boards, committees and commissions, and matters that the
30 Planning Commission and County Council address; and,
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32 WHEREAS, online meetings associated with COVID pandemic and have altered how
33 people interact with their government and present opportunities to rethink how the public
34 may engage with government; and,
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36 WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of recruiting people to volunteer for boards
37 and committees;
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39 WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of notifying the public about the business of
40 their government; and,
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42 WHEREAS, there are many potential ways that commissions, boards, and Council
43 can be assisted by Council and Executive staff in order to increase public participation; and,
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45 WHEREAS, there is a wealth of talent in the public and among County staff to advise
46 on how to enhance public participation in meetings of boards, committees, commissions,
47 and Council meetings; and,
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49 WHEREAS, the County Executive has expressed a willingness to helping to identify
50 staff who can help advise on these matters;

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council will work
2 with the County Executive to address the issue of public participation in our local
3 government and support recommendations for improvements; and,
4

5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Chair of the Council and the County Executive
6 may identify staff and citizens to form an ad-hoc group of limited duration; and,

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this group may survey members of all the County
8 boards, committees, and commissions regarding public participation in their meetings; and,

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the group may make recommendations to the
10 Council on the following and related issues:

- 11 1. Effectiveness of traditional methods of "notice" in light of the changing ways
- 12 individual's access news and information.
- 13 2. Needs and opportunities for public education on the issues addressed by local
- 14 government so that citizens can be more effective in their participation.
- 15 3. The use of remote meeting technologies to increase ease of participation beyond the
- 16 current public health crisis.
- 17 4. The mechanics of navigating and accessing policy and legislation on the county
- 18 website.
- 19 5. The public comment process and accessibility.
- 20 6. Evaluation of all public participation processes and procedures through an equity
- 21 lens.
- 22

23 **APPROVED** this 6th day of April, 2021.

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26
27 ATTEST:

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31 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Barry B. Buchanan

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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34 **APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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36 Approved via email by Karen Frakes / LB

37 Civil Deputy Prosecutor