

**WHATCOM COUNTY
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**
County Courthouse
311 Grand Ave. Suite #108
Bellingham, WA 98225



Satpal Singh Sidhu
County Executive

MEMO:

TO: Whatcom County Council
FROM: Jed Holmes, Public Affairs Manager
THROUGH: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
DATE: July 23, 2025
RE: Government Affairs Contract with Columbia Policy Advisors

The County Executive's Office is requesting approval of a contract with Columbia Policy Advisors to provide government affairs services. The terms and conditions of this contract match those of the County's current contract with Gordon Thomas Honeywell (GTH) that expires at the end of August.

Background

Last year, Whatcom concluded its three-party agreement with the City of Bellingham and Port of Bellingham to contract with McBride Public Affairs for lobbying services in Olympia. An RFP was conducted for a new government affairs contractor, and a team from Gordon Thomas Honeywell (GTH) led by lobbyist Josh Weiss was selected out of three applicants. Whatcom County subsequently entered into an annual contract with GTH.

Earlier this year, the County was informed by Josh Weiss that he had established a new government affairs firm under the name of Columbia Policy Advisors and that GTH had agreed to assign the responsibilities assumed in the current contract to the new firm with Whatcom County's consent. The assignment of the contract is permitted in the agreement language, and Whatcom County agreed to this arrangement through the end of the contract (August 31, 2025).

In June 2025, Whatcom County issued an RFP for a government affairs consultant. The sole respondent was Columbia Policy Advisors.

Contract Scope and Cost

The proposed contract with Columbia Policy Advisors retains the terms and conditions as well as the extensive scope of work of the current contract. The contract fee remains at \$86,040 per year, which aligns with the amount budgeted for this expense.

2026 Legislative Session

The Executive's Office continues to meet with state legislators and our lobbyist to discuss County priorities and needs. We intend to have a discussion on the upcoming legislative session with Council during the September 23 Committee of the Whole meeting.

Please send questions related to this contract to Jed Holmes (jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us).