

**Whatcom County
Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee**

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

9:25 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN LATE - ADJOURNS BY 10:35 A.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 Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 9:27 a.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

Council "Consent Agenda" Items

Galloway moved to recommend approval of Consent Agenda items one through eleven. The motion was seconded by Boyle.

Stremler stated he had questions on item numbers, 5, 6, 8, and 10.

Elenbaas stated he had questions on item number 2.

Consent Agenda item number 2 (AB2026-220) - Part 1

Jennifer Hayden, Health and Community Services, answered why this money is coming from Puget Sound Partnership, and stated they applied for a grant with them in order to get where they need to be with the County's program for inspecting businesses within the permit area for use of best management practices.

Elenbaas asked what kind of stipulations the Puget Sound Partnership gets to put on the program then, and Hayden stated she does not believe they have any.

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated all the terms and conditions are listed in the "Proposed Interlocal Agreement."

Champ Thomaskutty, Health and Community Services Director, confirmed that they are Federal pass-through dollars, and stated the Puget Sound Partnership has already approved what they were proposing through the grant process.

Elenbaas stated they are stipulating a bunch of things (after looking at the interlocal) about the program and he will come back to it.

Clerk's note: Councilmembers came back to this item after the other

questions. See below.

Consent Agenda item number 5 (AB2026-226), Consent Agenda item number 6 (AB2026-227), and Consent Agenda item number 8 (AB2026-229)

Sarah Simpson, Health and Community Services, answered whether there are any childcare slots coming out of these three items. She read from a presentation (on file) and walked them through the contracts which are all renewals of contracts they already had in place and serve many families but do not create slots. She answered if there is any progress with expansion of daycare in East County, and stated she believes five of the seven capital contracts they just closed on in the last request for proposal (RFP) cycle were outside the city of Bellingham. She said they are continuing to work on plans for how to expand out into those county spaces.

Consent Agenda item number 10 (AB2026-236)

Chris D'Onofrio, Health and Community Services, spoke about the contract and stated this is a lease extension for the facility where they had their severe winter shelter this winter but they are extending the lease with slightly different terms. They will have a smaller monthly rate and then a day-use fee if they do activate over the summer. They do not yet, however, have a firm plan for how and when they would operate a summer shelter.

Ann Beck, Health and Community Services, stated this is not a commitment to operate a shelter at this point, because that would be a much larger commitment from the community. This is just for them to have a place to store their operations from the winter, as well as an option to use the space as needed in coordination with the City of Bellingham and Department of Emergency Management.

D'Onofrio answered if the City of Bellingham does not have any facilities for potential heat and smoke, and stated he is not aware of any concrete plans they have for healthy air operations over the coming summer.

Consent Agenda item number 2 (AB2026-220) - Part 2

Elenbaas stated he wants to make sure the stipulations from Puget Sound Partnership are ones the council can live with. One of the things that concerned him was that they say that public comment is not required, and he wants to make sure they let people know what is coming and give them time to engage with the development of the program.

Scanlon stated this might be something to bring to the Business and

Commerce Advisory Committee.

Elenbaas requested that they consider this item separately.

Councilmembers voted on the Consent items (numbers 1 and 3-11) and then considered item number 2 separately (see votes on individual items below).

1. [AB2026-214](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an amended interlocal between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Transportation to increase the grant in the amount of \$34,250

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

2. [AB2026-220](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Puget Sound Partnership to provide grant funding for the development of a source control business inspection program that complies with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), in the amount of \$100,817

THIS ITEM WAS CONSIDERED SEPARATELY BELOW.

3. [AB2026-222](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham for the County to provide administrative oversight to the City concerning Domestic Violence Perpetrator Opportunity for Treatment Services (DVPOTS) for a total amount of \$150,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

4. [AB2026-225](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and the Washington State Military Department to relocate an All Hazards Alert Broadcast siren in the amount of \$45,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$45,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion

carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

5. [AB2026-226](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to purchase and distribute basic needs items to low-income families with children ages 0-5 in the amount of \$17,250 for a total amended contract amount of \$111,061

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

6. [AB2026-227](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Whatcom Center for Early Learning to expand mental health support services to low-income children in the amount of \$289,854 for a total amended contract amount of \$688,563

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

7. [AB2026-228](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Bellingham Food Bank to support operations for procuring/purchasing, warehousing and distributing food and other essentials to low and very low income families in the amount of \$500,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$1,945,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

8. [AB2026-229](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to expand services to eligible families through a Case Manager Position in the Single Entry Access to Services Program in the amount of \$46,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$86,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

9. [AB2026-230](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation to execute a Federal Aid Project Prospectus for the design phase of the Birch Bay-Lynden Road and Kickerville Road Intersection Improvements project in the amount of \$260,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

10. [AB2026-236](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Lutheran Community Services Northwest to lease a facility intended for use as a severe weather shelter in the amount of \$32,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$98,455

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Contract be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

11. [AB2026-241](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Skagit County to Skagit County's servers, in the amount of \$5,000

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION BY CONSENT. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

Council "Consent Agenda" Items Considered Separately

2. [AB2026-220](#) Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Puget Sound Partnership to provide grant funding for the development of a source control business inspection program that complies with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), in the amount of \$100,817

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Interlocal be RECOMMENDED FOR AUTHORIZATION. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremmler

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-213](#) Ordinance authorizing a sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent for criminal justice purposes as authorized by RCW 82.14.345 and adding a new Chapter 3.27 Sales and Use Tax for Criminal Justice Purposes to the Whatcom County Code

Scanlon stated this is just up for discussion because there is a public hearing tonight. He briefed the councilmembers on the documents attached to the file.

This file is the proposed ordinance from the executive. There is also an alternate ordinance for introduction, if they so choose, on the Council's agenda as **AB2026-255** (under Items Added by Revision) and attached here for reference. That version has added language that gives direction on the use of these funds for the first (2027-2028) biennium. There is also a draft resolution attached which says the same thing as the alternate but is just using a different mechanism to do so, and it does not require a public hearing. If they were to introduce the alternate ordinance, they would have a second public hearing at a later date. The idea behind the resolution is that they would most likely adopt the executive's proposal and then add the resolution, giving direction on where they would like to see the funds go.

Clerk's note: Exhibit A was initially inadvertently not included with the alternate ordinance but the document on file was later updated to include it. It is the same Exhibit A as in the executive's proposal.

Elenbaas stated he sees what they are spending the money on in the alternate ordinance and likes what has been proposed, but asked if it gets to the spirit of the law which was absolutely to increase the number of law enforcement per capita.

Scanlon stated his thought was to put the direction for use in the first biennium in the whereas clauses as opposed to locking that in for time in the code. He stated the executive's proposal is broader. If the sales tax is adopted, there is not direction in that proposal (other than what is noted in State law).

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, stated the intent with the executive's proposal was to leave it broad to allow for future Council discretion and decision making as part of each budget process. They did write a memo alongside the executive's proposal that spoke to some of the same priorities for this next biennium as are in Scanlon's alternate version.

Scanlon answered why he sees the need to direct the funds since it appears to limit the councils' ability in the future. He stated the language only sets a priority for the first biennium use of these funds, and it is to tell the people what we are doing. This does not even add a whole lot; it is about maintaining the level of service that we currently have.

Stremmer stated he has heard from constituents that this is a public safety tax but he has only seen that it is a criminal justice use tax. He would rather have the voters decide if the County is going to take \$7 million dollars out of their pockets, instead of the Council deciding.

Galloway spoke in support of the sales and use tax and of the executive's ordinance with a sister resolution.

Councilmembers and Schott-Bresler discussed the options before them, that there is a Special Council meeting on March 31st to discuss the resolution if that is the route that Council wants to go, that proposed uses of the fund from the executive's office would come out of the General Fund, that in the absence of new revenue the County should expect to absorb more than \$7 million of cuts in the 2027-2028 budget process across the departments, whether there are any new cost estimates for the priorities listed in the executive's memo that the Council should be aware of, and that even with this they may still need to find other cuts or forego something to be able to pay for those things.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-114](#) Ordinance establishing the project budget for the Strawberry Point/Lake Whatcom Boulevard stormwater improvements, request no. 1

Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office, answered if this was tied into the financial reporting requirement and stated their recommendation is that Director Rydel distributes the fourth quarter financial report prior to the rest of the committee meeting.

Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director, handed councilmembers copies of the 2025 fourth quarter financial report and stated it will be posted online later today.

Loni Patterson, Public Works Department, stated she was available for questions on this agenda item but there were none.

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

2. [AB2026-134](#) Ordinance amending the project budget for the Courthouse Building Envelope Fund, request no. 7

Galloway moved and Buchanan seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

3. [AB2026-143](#) Ordinance establishing the Ferndale Senior Activity Center Improvements Fund and establishing an initial budget for the Ferndale Senior Activity Center Improvements Fund

Galloway moved and Rienstra seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

4. [AB2026-181](#) Ordinance amending the project budget for the Eagleridge Stormwater Improvements Project Fund, request no. 1

Galloway moved and Buchanan seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

5. [AB2026-183](#) Ordinance amending the project based budget for the Swift Creek Capital Projects Fund, request no. 3

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the SUBSTITUTE Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, clarified that the motion was for the substitute.

Jed Holmes, Executive's Office, answered if they had any appropriation requests this year in the state legislature for Swift Creek and what the funding gap is for that project. He stated typically, these types of projects are not revisited in the mid-biennium so there were no requests, but they did discuss the ongoing need with the legislature. The county has received approximately half of the \$10-12 million (every biennium) commitment from the State for the last two bienniums so they are behind schedule on that project. It will certainly be part of the county's ask going into the next (long) session.

Galloway's motion that the SUBSTITUTE Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

6. [AB2026-200](#) Ordinance closing the Bellingham Senior Center HVAC Replacement Fund

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

7. [AB2026-204](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 5, in the amount of \$741,113

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Scanlon stated this is an item they discussed previously and has a memo from the executive stating that it would have complied with the Charter

prior to receiving the report and still does after the Council receiving the fourth quarter financial report.

Galloway's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 - Elenbaas, and Stremler

8. [AB2026-206](#) Ordinance amending the 2026 Whatcom County Budget, request no. 6, in the amount of \$3,920,278

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Scanlon stated this is the item where they separated out some of the items that they previously held off on (due to Charter requirements), and those are back in here, as well as some other newer items that have come in, and they align with some of the ordinances councilmembers just voted on.

The following people gave brief highlights of the fourth quarter financial report and answered questions:

- Randy Rydel, Administrative Services Department Finance Director
- Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office

They stated they hope to formally brief the councilmembers on the report at the second meeting in April, concurrent with an update on the budget process.

Galloway's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

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

Nay: 0

9. [AB2026-238](#) Resolution updating the appendix of the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) project list

Galloway moved and Boyle seconded that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

The following people discussed the resolution with councilmembers and answered questions:

- Tyler Schroeder, Port of Bellingham Economic Development

- Jake Logan, Executive's Office
- Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office
- Doug Ranney, Public Works Department

They discussed the revised change log (on file), that the Point Roberts boat launch would be located within the Point Roberts Marina, that the first four pages are Whatcom County projects and the rest are other municipalities, that items in purple text represent additions and changes are gold on the change log, that they added clarification to the plantation range to recognize HVAC and added the Behavioral Care Center to the new jail build in the revised log, that some changes (including the two aforementioned and outfitting for the Planning and Development Services building) did not get incorporated into the proposed resolution and can be added to a substitute version for tonight's meeting, that the Birch Bay-Lynden / California Creek fish passage culvert replacement is on the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program though it is not specifically named on this list and that it is difficult to have 100 percent consistency between all the lists, and how much they work with the cities to update the list for projects that have been completed.

Scanlon asked if the committee would still like to give a recommendation to Council since they will likely see changes made before the evening meeting.

Galloway withdrew her motion to recommend the resolution for approval and it was forwarded to Council without a recommendation.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger