

**PROPOSED BY:** CLERK OF THE COUNCIL  
**INTRODUCED:** JANUARY 13, 2026

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**ESTABLISHING WHATCOM COUNTY CODE SECTION 2.02.195  
PERFORMANCE AUDITS**

**WHEREAS**, the 2025 Charter Review Commission submitted Proposition 3, Establishing Performance Audits, to Whatcom County voters in the November 4, 2025 General Election; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County voters approved Proposition 3 by 85.33 percent, and the results were certified by the Whatcom County Auditor on November 25, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, Charter Section 2.70, as established by Proposition 3, allows the council to conduct audits of financial operations of the county government and performance or program audits to review the effectiveness and efficiency of county programs; and

**WHEREAS**, Charter Section 2.80, as established by Proposition 3, requires the council to establish by ordinance an independent county performance auditing process within the legislative branch for the purpose of reviewing, evaluating, and reporting on the integrity of the county's financial management system, the accuracy of financial record keeping, compliance with applicable laws, policies, guidelines, and procedures, and the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and programs; and

**WHEREAS**, the [Office of the Washington State Auditor](#) highlights the importance of performance audits in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs, with the goal of making them work better; and

**WHEREAS**, audits of Whatcom County's financial statements and adherence to state laws, regulations, and local procedures are currently conducted ~~only~~ by the Washington State Auditor's Office ~~at least once every three years annually~~ in accordance with RCW [43.09.260](#) ~~and, or~~ in connection with federal grants or other federal funding; and

**WHEREAS**, the State Auditor system allows for the county to select program areas for additional financial auditing and also provides additional advice and services at local government request; and

**WHEREAS**, Whatcom County residents will benefit from the increased transparency and accountability that independent performance audits provide, including improved public programs and services, cost savings from identifying inefficiencies, waste, and areas for improvement, and assurance that the county is complying with legal and regulatory standards.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County Code Section 2.02.195 Performance Audits is hereby established as shown in Exhibit A.

**ADOPTED** this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Kimberly Thulin by email 1/23/26 (ks)  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

( ) Approved      ( ) Denied

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXHIBIT A

### **2.02.195 Performance Audits.**

A. The council shall develop and oversee a performance audit program to provide objective, third-party financial, performance, and program audits of county programs, services, and operations in accordance with the Whatcom County Charter as permitted by law. When authorized by the council, performance audits will be conducted to review, evaluate, and report on the integrity of the county's financial management system, the accuracy of financial record keeping, compliance with applicable laws, policies, guidelines, and procedures, and the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and programs.

B. The council shall determine when a performance audit is needed and shall initiate each audit by motion and vote.

C. All procurement processes shall comply with state, federal, and local laws, including Whatcom County Code and Whatcom County Charter. For each audit, the council shall approve, by motion and vote, the scope of the audit to be conducted, including but not limited to areas of inquiry, timeline, and reporting requirements. The clerk of the council or their designee shall manage the procurement process and contracting and will provide updates to council as needed. The selection committee for each third-party auditor shall include:

1. Two members of the council.
2. The clerk of the council or designee.
3. The civil deputy prosecuting attorney assigned to the council.

D. All county elected officials and employees shall provide the third-party auditors engaged by the council under this section with the following in a timely manner:

1. All requested information and records.
2. Full access to inspect county property, equipment, and facilities.
3. Full cooperation during interviews.

E. All audits conducted under this section shall use the United States Government Accountability Office's Government Auditing Standards as a guideline when conducting performance audits.

F. The council receives each audit report and approves sending recommendations to the executive and/or applicable county department.

G. Beginning January 1, 2029, and biennially thereafter, the executive, and/or elected official(s) overseeing the applicable county department or office, shall report to the council on the implementation of the approved recommendations resulting from each performance audit performed under this section, including achieved cost savings and expected return on investment.<sup>7</sup>