

**Whatcom County  
Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee**

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



**Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes**

**Tuesday, June 9, 2026**

**11:35 AM**

**Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers**

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 12:25 P.M.  
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT  
[www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://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 Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 11:26 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**

## **Special Presentation**

1. [AB2026-417](#) Presentation from Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management (BBWARM) District Advisory Committee regarding funding

Jane Mauk, Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management (BBWARM) District Advisory Committee, read from a presentation (on file) on the purpose of BBWARM and how it came to be, how fees are collected from the district, past and future capital improvement projects, other types of projects they work on, and funding requests. She stated they are requesting that REET II funding continues to be allocated in their next budget cycle. She spoke about a comprehensive study that determined, for the next decade, what the district's fees should be and that a new fee was approved by the Council and went into effect in 2024. The study said it would also incorporate \$200,000 in REET II funding and approximately \$445,000 per year from the Road Fund and that would supplement BBWARM's capital improvements for the next decade. Without the funding, however, the scope and effectiveness of their programs will be severely impacted. She stated, if the Council cannot approve the REET II funding, they are asking that they approve a one percent increase in the Flood Control Zone District tax or release banked capacity in order to support BBWARM. She spoke about three capital improvement projects that need to get done.

Holly Faulstich, Public Works Department, answered what the relationship is with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) crew and program, and stated they are very integrated, but BBWARM basically helps to enhance the level of service that NPDES provides because they are overlapping jurisdictions (the NPDES area covers a smaller portion of the BBWARM district). She answered what the illegal dumping response looks like.

Debbie Arthur, Executive's Office, spoke about the Executive's Office

perspective on the funding request, and gave an update on their work on the Capital Improvement Program and on the biennial budget.

Faulstich stated that as far as she knows, the Executive's Office is proposing to continue funding BBWARM with REET II through 2027, but the request would be to have some sort of stable funding source from 2028 onward.

Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Department Director, stated they are actively working with the Executive's Office on alternative funding and will be bringing this back next year too since the budget with BBWARM is part of the 6-Year Water Resources Improvement Plan (WRIP) and it is an annual requirement.

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed that biennial budget conversations will happen this fall and it would be great to hear from BBWARM again if anything changes, if there are any State funds that relate to shellfish protection that they might be able to use to supplement BBWARM's budget, why the REET funding was not included for 2028 and that Public Works is still trying to work out what they are doing (other types of revenue) for that year, that it will be tough on the Road Fund to maintain that contribution, that maybe they could talk about whether the ferry district revenue might relieve the Road Fund and what projects they might buy back because of that, having a conversation (as they move forward with the budget) about what happened with REET I and II (maybe priorities are being shifted for those funds) and making sure the shifts in those strategies are aligned with Council's priorities, a desire to see from the executive a proposal for using banked capacity in the Flood Control Zone District when they contemplate the levy ordinances, and what recommendation the advisory committee might have for Point Roberts and the Council as they consider how to help Point Roberts with their stormwater issues.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

2. [AB2026-455](#) Presentation from Aaron Straight and Jeff Bos regarding The Water Wars (How to Avoid)

Scanlon introduced the presentation. He spoke about a recent event at which the presenters spoke and stated it gives him a lot of hope for a lot of the water issues in Whatcom County. He stated the whole idea is about bringing people together.

Aaron Straight and Jeffry Bos read from a presentation (on file) and played

a short film which was a recap of the recent event hosted by the Lummi Nation and was about their efforts bring people together to foster collaboration and connection related to the topic of water. They stated that their work now is in conversations with people that are working on the water issues and challenges across the county and to start to learn from them about what working together looks like. They have been intentionally starting small and building personal relationships (cultivating the social soil), and they will continue to do that. But now they are also ready to share this story with the community. They will present public screenings starting in November.

Councilmembers thanked them for their work.

Scanlon spoke about the Water for Whatcom group which is getting more into the technical and policy details of the work, and stated he is glad they have multiple efforts in the community on this front. He spoke about the Lummi Nation event.

Bos stated we are learning how to live, work, and be together then we can move into the harder conversations. If we have done the first part, the hard conversations do not feel as hard because we understand where each other is coming from, and we can then find the best solution possible for all of us.

**This agenda item was PRESENTED.**

### **Items Added by Revision**

There were no agenda items added by revision.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:24 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

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Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

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Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger