

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

10 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Conference Room

ANNUAL COUNCIL RETREAT (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON AT 311 GRAND AVENUE, SUITE 105, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil or CALL 360-778-5010)

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, Mark Stremmer, and Barry Buchanan

Announcements**Special Council Item**

1. [AB2025-228](#) Annual Council retreat to review general Council rules, policies, and procedures and discuss 2025 priorities

COUNCIL OFFICE UPDATES

Approximate Timestamp: 00:51

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, introduced the Council Office Updates (see topics on file in the attached agenda) and she and the following Council Office staff spoke and answered questions:

- Jenna Gernand
- Lisa Bruner
- Kirsten Smith
- Kiana Oos
- Kristi Felbinger
- Tara Jackson

Staff and the following discussed these topics with Councilmembers:

- George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Councilmembers and the speakers discussed the Open Public Meetings Act and how it applies in different situations, what constitutes communication in regard to public records requests and how records requests should be used by Councilmembers, attorney client privilege, how Councilmembers interact with proposed Charter amendments from the Charter Review Commission, responding to emails received in the Council's email, and Council meeting accessibility.

EXPECTATIONS

Approximate Timestamp: 1:22:33

Councilmembers discussed expectations for the Council (topics listed on file), the sexual harassment prevention training offered by the County and

making sure employees feel safe at work, and balancing between maintaining decorum and being approachable in meetings,

The following person answered questions:

- George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

POLICY PROCESS

[Approximate Timestamp: 1:40:45](#)

The following people spoke about best practices for the legislative process (on file) and answered questions:

- Kiana Oos, Council Office Staff
- George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Kirsten Smith, Council Office Staff

Councilmembers and staff discussed what is involved in legal review of proposed agenda items, available legislative tools (on file in “Councilmember Best Practices”) for Councilmembers, learning how to create tracked changes in order to submit amendments as a substitute version to an ordinance that is under consideration, having more information on what triggers a file to have a public hearing, how to handle substantive changes to an ordinance and keeping an item in committee (delaying a vote) until it is completely discussed, and using advisory bodies more in the decision-making process.

Clerk's note: Councilmembers took a break for lunch and resumed the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE INFORMATION

[Approximate Timestamp: 2:58:13](#)

The following Executive's Office Staff spoke:

- Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
- Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office
- Kayla Schott-Bresler, Executive's Office

They and Councilmembers discussed Councilmembers being able to see the adopted budget along with changes that occurred and compare that with the actual budget, Council communicating their budget priorities to the Executive's Office before the mid-biennium review, getting back to the basics of core County services, how Councilmembers can find the time and space to sit and discuss what their priorities are, projecting out further for

revenues, reporting back to the Council on prioritization goals and how they are going, how Council can keep the Administration in the loop when they are communicating with department staff, and utilizing advisory groups to advocate and lobby around state budget.

MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION (not on agenda)

Approximate Timestamp: 3:58:19

George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, stated they could do a motion and vote if they are interested in going to executive session to discuss pending personnel matters with the County Executive.

Galloway stated she would like to entertain a motion to enter into an executive session until no later than 2:30 p.m. to have a discussion pursuant to RCW 42.30.110 (1)(i)(iii) to discuss a personnel matter.

Elenbaas moved to go into executive session.

The motion was seconded by Scanlon.

Councilmembers discussed the motion.

Attorneys present were George Roche and Kim Thulin from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremmler

Nay: 0

Out of the Meeting: 1 - Buchanan

Councilmembers entered executive session at 2:04 p.m.

At 2:29 p.m. Galloway stated they will need to extend the executive session until no later than 2:50 p.m.

At 2:50 p.m. Galloway stated they need to extend the executive session until no later than 3:05 p.m.

At 3:05 p.m. Galloway stated they had concluded the executive session and Councilmembers would take a short break.

MEETING PROCEDURES

Approximate Timestamp: 5:04:20

Councilmembers discussed Parliamentary procedures and meeting efficiency.

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council, spoke about the process of agenda setting (subtopics listed on file) and answered questions. She and Councilmembers discussed meeting body chairs not being able to see agenda items before the agenda is published, Councilmembers not getting meeting materials from presenters or drafters before a meeting and just getting them last minute, moving the deadline to Monday at noon before a meeting to receive presentations, changing the default sequence for discussing and considering ordinances, scheduling a continuation of this agenda at another meeting, pathways for Councilmembers to get their priorities on an agenda, and the role of committee chairs.

George Roche, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, answered questions about the docketing process.

Councilmembers discussed a list of ideas for changing evening Council meeting procedures for Councilmembers to consider, and having more meetings like this for Councilmembers to be able to work together.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

