

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

2:35 PM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M.; MAY BEGIN EARLY
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kaylee Galloway, and Kathy Kershner

Absent: None

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2022-532](#) Update from Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District on the California Creek Estuary project

The following people presented:

- Ted Morris, Capital Project Specialist for the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District
- Heather Lindsay, Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District Director

Morris answered whether the estuary project will improve the functionality of the estuary or whether it is just stand-alone.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2022-560](#) Presentation from the Port of Bellingham and PUD#1 regarding broadband projects and planning

The following people presented:

- Chris Heimgartner, Whatcom PUD General Manager
- Andrew Entrikin, Whatcom PUD Broadband Program Manager

The speakers, Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, and Councilmembers discussed whether the unserved areas on the maps shown in the presentation are those that the Port of Bellingham said would not be included in the Port's maps and that they cannot get to, the definition of being served by private Internet Service Providers (ISPs) since some "served" areas do not meet the internet speed standards, whether private industries would go into harder-to-service areas they have passed over because it is not lucrative if grant and government funding for building out infrastructure were available to them, the difference between aerial or ground connection that might go

in Point Roberts and how they determine which house gets what, online GIS mapping tools for showing internet speeds in different areas of the county, whether a company like Comcast for whom internet is not their bread and butter would have the same access to compete with a provider like PogoZone, what areas are out there that show they are being served but are actually not served well and whether we may be spending a lot of money on services that may not be viable, whether the ISPs have all been identified and whether they are all invited to be service providers on this new network that is being built, which ISP would respond to a problem like a pole being knocked out if two neighbors have two different providers, why it is good that PogoZone would own the infrastructure in 25 years, whether the steering committee does not see the Indefeasible Right of Use (IRU) until after the Port of Bellingham has signed it, how PogoZone got selected and how the other providers compete if PogoZone is the selected provider, getting a definition of open access versus public ownership, what would stop an ISP from charging a lot of money if there is not competition, whether the grant submission is time sensitive, whether it is a possibility to go in the direction of the SkagitNet model as opposed to the model being proposed, and getting the outcome of the PUD's feasibility study before allocating money.

This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.

3. [AB2022-584](#) Presentation of the County Executive's proposed 2023-2024 Biennial Budget
Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, read from a presentation (on file) and he and the following people answered questions:

- Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services
- Brad Bennett, Administrative Services Department Finance

They answered where the Racial Equity Commission and the Water Solutions Table are found in the budget, what the minimum is we can have in the General Fund, how long the County has been using the jail fund to pay for corrections deputies and operations and how the money they are collecting from the sales tax increase has been used, what the public might be expecting the County to be putting aside for a new facility, whether the budget for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is assuming the levy passes or whether it is without the levy, why the Flood Control Zone District revenue and expenditures are blank in the presentation slide for 2024, whether the numbers for 2021 on the "General Fund Revenue Projections" slide are actual or budget, and where the increase in tax revenue between the 2022 adopted budget and 2023 recommended budget is coming from.

Schroeder spoke about documents that are available online.

This agenda item was PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2022-585](#) Discussion of the Whatcom County, City of Bellingham and Port of Bellingham Legislative Agenda

Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services, briefed the Councilmembers.

Galloway made suggestions for the following objectives:

Criminal Justice

Refer to criminal justice and public safety.

Capital Budget Priorities

Add something about open access so it reads:

- Continued funding for countywide, open access broadband infrastructure

Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability

Add a bullet point on culverts.

Housing Affordability and Child Care

Add in conversation around missing middle housing and workforce housing.

She stated she is interested in having specific bills that they advocate for and cohosting a legislative send-off probably in December to gather our local legislative delegations and let them know what our priorities are and vice-versa.

Schroeder stated he will speak with the Bellingham and Port of Bellingham representatives to see if we can update this document to recognize the suggestions and they are working with the City and the Port about doing a legislative send-off.

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 4:33 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription