

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

1:35 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY/LATE - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.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

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Absent: 1 - Elizabeth Boyle

Announcements

Executive Appointment

1. [AB2026-302](#) Request confirmation of the County Executive's appointment of Deborah Arthur as Deputy Executive/Administrative Services Director effective April 13, 2026

DISCUSSED

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-261](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 10, Environment

DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

MOTION 1

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 10 using preliminary Council draft dated April 14th, 2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by Council members as listed on the chart of proposed Council changes.

MOTION 2 – Amendment number 27

Motion approved to amend the second to last sentence to strike "recent trends in monitoring show that these improvements of the past may be at risk" and insert "water quality improvements may be at risk" so that the sentence would read, "Unfortunately, water quality improvements may be at risk."

MOTION 3

Motion approved to amend the motion to include amendment number 32 to change the word "require" to "encourage" in amendment number 32.

MOTION 4

Motion approved to include amendment number 32 from the amendment chart to add new policy 10F-6 as amended which reads:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to ensure water quality and quantity. Strategies may include installing water catchment systems.

MOTION 5

Motion approved to amend the motion to include amendment number 36 (10H-8) to change the first sentence so that it reads:

Encourage the use of low-impact sustainable development strategies to minimize the effects of increased development in order to mitigate the effects of increased impermeable surfaces and increased stormwater runoff.

MOTION 6

Motion approved to include amendment number 36 in the amendment chart as amended (in motion 5).

MOTION 7

Motion approved to include amendment number 37 from the chart of amendments.

MOTION 8

Motion approved to include amendment number 38 (from the chart of amendments) with the staff's recommendation to amend the first sentence of section 5 so that that sentence reads:

Focus on the Lake Whatcom watershed as a high priority in implementing stormwater management programs and ensuring the proper function of public and private stormwater systems.

MOTION 9

Motion approved to strike new policy 10H-13 (amendment number 39).

MOTION 10

Motion approved to amend Policy 10I-5 so that it reads:

Encourage quantification of water use to help promote conservation.

MOTION 11

Motion approved to include amendment number 41 and to amend it so that it reads:

Policy 10J-9: Update County phosphorus neutral development code in the Lake Whatcom watershed, with a goal of meeting or exceeding the standards set by the corresponding City of Bellingham policies to ensure they are protective of lake water quality.

MOTION 12

Motion approved to amend Policy 10J-10 so that it reads:

Use BMPs as approved by the Department of Ecology to minimize development impacts within the Lake Whatcom watershed through regular monitoring and inspections of public and private stormwater systems.

MOTION 13

Motion approved that they remove Policy 10K-9 (amendment number 50).

MOTION 14

Motion approved to include the staff revised versions for amendment numbers 56 and 57 so that they read:

Policy 10L-7 Explore ways to fund an updated mapping of shoreline armoring and/or use Ecology's updated shoreline conditions inventory to create a database of existing shoreline armoring.

Policy 10L-8: Ensure that amendments to the Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinances protect marine shorelines. Seek ways to reduce existing shoreline armoring, prevent expansion that would impact forage fish spawning and salmonid migratory pathways, and re-establish or widen intertidal corridors for migrating juvenile salmon that have been lost due to shoreline armoring.

MOTION 15

Motion approved to amend the last sentence of Policy 10L-14 (amendment number 59) so that the policy reads:

In coordination with FLIP, consider establishing formal channel migration zones for the Nooksack River, precluding additional development within these zones, actively pursue voluntary acquisitions to promote flood risk reduction and riverine and marine shoreline restoration. Work with property owners on levee setback projects to provide more flood storage and improve natural river processes and meandering, riparian buffers, and salmon habitat.

MOTION 16

Motion approved to include amendment number 60 to reflect the staff's comments so that new Policy 10L-15 would read:

During and after emergency flood repairs conducted by Whatcom County, ensure that any repair is mitigated to applicable permitting conditions to reduce impacts to salmon habitat.

MOTION 17

Motion approved to include amendment number 65 (new Policy 10N-2) as amended so that it reads:

Incorporate projects and data collection such as the Marine Resources Committee's kelp and eelgrass monitoring, forage fish monitoring, Olympia oyster restoration, water quality monitoring, harmful algal bloom monitoring, beach cleanups, mussel watch, and European green crab monitoring to inform County planning processes.

MOTION 18

Motion approved to include amendment numbers 66 and 67 (new policies 10N-4 and 10N-5) and amend number 67 so that the policies read:

Policy 10N-4: Conserve kelp and eelgrass as critical marine resources, recognizing their importance in providing diverse and productive ecosystems, contribute to carbon and nutrient sequestration, and help protect and stabilize coastal environments. Ensure any potential commercial opportunities are pursued responsibly.

Policy 10N-5: Explore external grant opportunities to fund mapping Whatcom County eelgrass and kelp beds to establish a baseline data set, and add this data to statewide maps used in planning and development.

MOTION 19

Motion approved to include amendment number 69 (Policy 10N-7) as amended to strike the word “decreasing” so that it reads:

Policy 10N-7: Monitor current trends for population growth, aging infrastructure, water quality, and climate change, and how these factors impact the state of marine resources and reduced populations of salmon, forage fish, kelp, and eelgrass. Measure county progress towards restoration.

2. [AB2026-262](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 12, Climate

NOT ACTED UPON

3. [AB2026-263](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Appendices (Appendix A: Glossary, Appendix B: Acronyms, Appendix D: Bibliography, Appendix E: 20-Year Capital Facilities Plan, Appendix G: Airport Overlay Zones, Appendix H: Airport Imaginary Surfaces, Appendix I: Housing Needs Analysis, Appendix J: Subsidized Housing Needs and Funding) and Foothills Subarea Plan Amendments

NOT ACTED UPON

Items Added by Revision**Other Business****Adjournment**