



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council
FROM: Councilmember Kaylee Galloway, Councilmember Jon Scanlon
DATE: July 30, 2026
RE: Council Office procedures, meeting logistics, and efficiency measures

In preparation for difficult budget times, the Council Office must act now to help reduce costs. All county departments will operate with reduced budgets resulting in reductions in services. Recent workforce changes, including employee attrition, have resulted in a net reduction of one FTE position in the Council Office. This will require change that is uncomfortable as reductions in staff capacity will impact levels of service both internally and externally.

The following list for council consideration may create efficiencies as our office and all offices in county government are called upon to operate with fewer resources.

1. Save time in meetings

Council staff members and other county staff such as the Executive's office, department heads, council attorney, sheriff deputy, contracted security, and others are often in attendance at council meetings. Collectively, this is a significant amount of staff time and resources. As such, reducing meeting time means savings of staff time and costs. Consider the following time saving strategies:

- a. Start no earlier than 9:00 a.m. and aim to end no later than 9:00 p.m. (see meeting consolidation below)
- b. Adjust agenda capacity to meet time limitations
- c. Consider setting parameters for public hearings and open session (see meeting consolidation below)
 - Finance and Administrative Services Committee (FAS) public comment up to 30 min and 2 min speaking time, to allow for final action in committee. Limit comments to items on the agenda.
 - Council public hearings and open session up to 120 minutes and 2 min speaking time
- d. Limit councilmember updates (e.g. time limit to 3 min. max or move to committee meetings)
- e. Adhere to parliamentary procedure to manage discussion time.
- f. Limit time for presentations and reports
 - Limit all presentation times to 15 minutes or less (10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for Q&A/discussion).
 - Exceptions approved by the Clerk/Chair
 - Hold all Councilmember questions until the end of the presentation as often the presenter answers a question later in their presentation. When possible, ask staff questions in advance of the meeting.

2. Consolidation of Meeting Bodies

Consider consolidation of meeting bodies to schedule Finance and Administrative Services Committee (FAS), Committee of the Whole (COTW), and Council as outlined below. Since all committees are now seven members, this change would not affect what content a councilmember sees based on committee assignments. Consolidating committees would reduce staff time preparing and processing up to five different committee agendas and allow more flexibility in committee timing. Committee schedules could be scheduled at a predictable time, FAS at 9:00 a.m. and COTW at 1:00 p.m. A code change by ordinance amending [Whatcom County Code 2.02.075](#) or a temporary pilot motion to refer all items to specific committees during a specific test time period may be an appropriate path forward.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE (FAS)

- Final action on contracts, budget amendments, and appointments (no longer in Council)
- Public Comment limited to 30 min and 2 min speaking time (or 15 potential speakers)
 - Limit comments to items on the agenda
 - Adding additional public comment opportunity to the day
 - Note: RCW requires public comment at all meetings where final action is taken.
- Standing agenda header for Executive Session with items scheduled as needed
 - Executive Session would be a break out session from FAS (and/or COTW) and no longer its own meeting body
- Regularly scheduled start time at 9:00 a.m., adjourns by 12:00 p.m. (3 hours total)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COTW)

- Presentations and discussion on all items not covered in FAS - no final action. Final action on all other items would take place during evening council meeting.
- Councilmember Updates (relocated from evening meeting) – can include report outs from entities with councilmember representation, community happenings, and policy priorities updates.
- Regularly scheduled starting at 1:00 p.m., adjourns by 4:30 p.m. (3.5 hours total)

COUNCIL

- Public Hearings
- Open Session limited to 60 minutes and 2 min speaking time (or 30 potential speakers)
 - Note: Second public comment opportunity of the day.
- Total public hearing and open session time set at 2 hours maximum
- No consent agenda from FAS since final action is in FAS
- Final action on resolutions and ordinances
- Remove committee reports – no longer needed since committees are all seven members
- No councilmember updates – moved to COTW.
- Revise last header to COMMITTEE MOTIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS
- Introduction items
 - Note: as per recent motion, items requiring discussion on the day of intro (budget ordinances, public hearing items, plans) have discussion items in either FAS or COTW

HEALTH BOARD MEETINGS

- 4 per year instead of 6
- Additional meetings can be scheduled if needed
- Historically there were only 4 meetings a year, increased after COVID

3. Advisory Groups

- A. Staffing advisory groups for OPMA compliance (creating agendas, noticing meetings, creating minutes, posting recordings and meeting documents)
 - i. Staff intensive depending on cadence of meeting schedule
 - ii. Retaining advisory groups in perpetuity, no political will to disband
- B. Create sunset clauses for advisory groups in [WCC 2.03](#) and or specific code sections to trigger council review of whether continuation of advisory group is needed.
 - i. Set clear expectations and tasks for advisory groups created by Council so it is clear when the task is completed and no longer relevant
- C. Utilize 'workgroup' or 'task force' models not subject to OPMA when new topics arise, and allow presentations to COTW for feedback to council. Identify consolidation of advisory groups where there are similar topics
 - i. See survey of advisory groups, [AB2024-646](#)
- D. Consider eliminating the OPMA requirement in county code for advisory groups
 - i. See OPMA Memo, [AB2024-646](#)
 - ii. Consider less staff intensive open and public alternatives to OPMA
- E. Processing advisory group applications on a fewer than year-round rolling basis
 - i. Could limit to quarterly or twice a year, with special exception for groups with less than a quorum appointed
- F. IPRTF Subcommittees (2026 discussions)
 - i. Recent consolidation of subcommittees includes
 - A. Moving Pre-Trial Processes Workgroup into the [Legal and Justice Committee](#)
 - B. Reduction of [Legal and Justice Committee](#) from monthly to every other month meetings, and
 - C. Joint [Legal and Justice Committee](#) meetings with Behavioral Health Committee meetings, 3 times per year.
 - ii. In 2026, Council staff took on the responsibility of writing the IPRTF annual reports.
 - iii. In 2027, in lieu of funding a JPOP consultant, council staff will provide logistical support for JPOP (agendas, meeting hosting, minutes, website).
 - iv. Council has not come to an agreement regarding the status of staff support for IPRTF subcommittees (consider motion/vote)

4. Council Office Communications

- A. Reduce Community Conversations to one per district per year, only use free locations, and keep it to fewer than a quorum of councilmembers so it's not a special council meeting.

5. Legislation and related support

- A. Adhere to agenda deadline for councilmember items, which is Tuesday at noon the week prior to the meeting. Items must be in final draft format with attorney signature.
 - Agenda revisions take time to process and are sent out at noon on Monday the day before the meeting. Items must be in final draft with attorney sign off.
- B. Require council work session or at least 1 councilmember co-sponsor before requesting policy staff time on a project. If the project is anticipated to take a large percentage of staff time to research and provide councilmember support, work with the Clerk to add an agenda item so that the full council can vote on allocating a significant portion of staff time.
- C. Use Project Request Form when possible as it identifies clearly all the elements and timelines for the project.