

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Action Summary

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

2:05 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 4:15 P.M.
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT
www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010); AGENDA
REVISED 5.22.2025

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2025-358](#) Presentation from Health and Community Services on housing program updates
WITHDRAWN

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2025-396](#) Discussion regarding Council Office budget adjustments for mid-biennium
DISCUSSED

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2025-221](#) Discussion and motion relating to draft Countywide Planning Policy amendments
DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED

Section I (9)

Motion approved to amend policy I (9) (in Exhibit A) as recommended by the County's Surface Mining Advisory Committee, so that it reads:

The County and the cities recognize the need for the protection and utilization of natural resources and resource lands including agricultural, mineral, forestry and fishing. As part of a broad based economy, productive timber, agriculture, fisheries, and mineral resource industries should be supported to operate in a sustainable manner.

Section A (6)

Motion approved to retain the following language in section A (6): "and provide the ability to make accurate comparison of issues so appropriate trade-offs can be consciously made" so that the section reads:

Various planning techniques, such as overlay maps and Geographic Information Systems, shall be utilized to allow the public and public officials to evaluate planning proposals and provide the ability to make accurate comparison of issues so appropriate trade-offs can be consciously made.

Section B (1)

Motion approved to amend section B (1) to retain the language with the modifications of the planner group which reads:

The county may work with the public to further define or modify types of rural areas based on the characteristics and needs of different areas.

Section B (5)

Motion approved to amend section B (5) to reinstate the language as modified so that it reads:

Whatcom County may undertake a public process to further define or modify rural areas and rural growth as distinct from urban growth areas.

Section G (7)

Motion approved to amend section G (7) to reinsert the language “Low income,” so that the section reads:

Low income, Multi-family and diverse and supportive housing options shall not be concentrated in only a few communities or neighborhoods.

Section C (5)

Motion approved to amend section C (5) to add “treaty natural resources (e.g. salmon, wildlife, traditional foods), tribal cultural resources,” as suggested in the letter from the Nooksack Tribal Council so that the section reads:

Urban Growth Areas should be established in a way that preserves agricultural land, forestry, mineral resources, treaty natural resources (e.g. salmon, wildlife, traditional foods), tribal cultural resources, water resources, and critical areas. Urban growth shall maintain proper buffers from natural resource areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources and industries based on them.

Section D (4)

Motion approved to amend section D (4) to delete the words, “and achieve the desired vision” as suggested by the planning group so that the section reads:

Existing cities should accommodate additional housing at a range of densities appropriately responsive to the city's community vision before extending city Urban Growth Areas into areas where growth would adversely impact critical areas and resource lands. In those small cities entirely or almost entirely surrounded by flood plains, critical area and resource lands or within Shellfish Protection Districts, the County and cities shall seek to negotiate a balance between protection of resources and the allocation of adequate land area to meet the growth needs of the city.

Section M (1)

Motion approved to amend section M (1) to add the language requested by the Tribes which adds in, “representatives of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe and, where deemed appropriate, representatives from other agencies and Tribes” so that the section reads:

The County and the cities will coordinate and cooperate throughout the comprehensive plan, development regulations and urban growth area reviews and updates undertaken pursuant to the Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A. This coordination and cooperation will address topics including but not limited to amount and location of population, housing, and employment growth, capital facilities, transportation, climate change and community resilience. As a component of this coordination and cooperation, the County Executive may convene a Growth Management Planning Committee comprised of elected officials from the County and the cities, representatives of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe and, where deemed appropriate, representatives from other agencies and Tribes.

Section N (3)

Motion approved to add the suggested language from the Nooksack Tribal Council "and protect treaty natural resources, " to add a comma after "quality of life" and strike the "and" after that phrase, and to add a comma after "economic health" so that the section would read:

Jurisdictions shall cooperate to protect and restore water resources and fish habitat within UGA's and across jurisdictional boundaries to maintain quality of life, economic health, and protect treaty natural resources in Whatcom County.

Section S (4)

Motion to amend section S (4) to add "Tribal cultural resources include sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value" to the end of the section so that it reads:

The County and cities will work with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and affected tribes to identify, protect and manage historic, archaeological, and cultural sites as well as sites and structures of significance in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. Tribal cultural resources include sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value.

Main motion

Motion approved to approve the countywide planning policies described in Exhibit A (the version recommended by the Planning Commission) as amended.

- [AB2025-264](#) Ordinance to amend Whatcom County Code Section 3.08.100, Council approval required, to increase the threshold for contracts that require council approval

RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION

Aye: 4 - Buchanan, Donovan, Galloway, and Scanlon

Nay: 3 - Byrd, Elenbaas, and Stremler

Enactment No: ORD 2025-028

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