

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Comprehensive Plan  
Capital Facility (Six-Year CIP) Amendments**

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND REASONS FOR ACTION**

**Background Information**

1. The proposal is to amend the following chapters of the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2023-2028 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan):
  - a. Parks, Trails, and Activity Centers;
  - b. General Government Buildings and Sites; and
  - c. Total Costs.
2. Notice of the subject amendments was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on April 20, 2023.
3. The SEPA Official determined on April 21, 2023 that the determination of non-significance (DNS) issued in 2022 for the Six-Year CIP update is sufficient for the subject amendments.
4. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was posted on the County website on April 26, 2023.
5. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was published in the Bellingham Herald on April 28, 2023.
6. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was sent to the County's email list on April 28, 2023.
7. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the subject amendments on May 11, 2023.
8. Pursuant to WCC 22.10.060(1), in order to approve the proposed comprehensive plan amendments the County must find all of the following:

- a. The amendment conforms to the requirements of the Growth Management Act, is internally consistent with the county-wide planning policies and is consistent with any interlocal planning agreements.
- b. Further studies made or accepted by the Department of Planning and Development Services indicate changed conditions that show need for the amendment.
- c. The public interest will be served by approving the amendment. In determining whether the public interest will be served, factors including but not limited to the following shall be considered:
  - i. The anticipated effect upon the rate or distribution of population growth, employment growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the comprehensive plan.
  - ii. The anticipated effect on the ability of the county and/or other service providers, such as cities, schools, water and/or sewer purveyors, fire districts, and others as applicable, to provide adequate services and public facilities including transportation facilities.
  - iii. Anticipated impact upon designated agricultural, forest and mineral resource lands.
- d. The amendment does not include or facilitate spot zoning.

### **Growth Management Act**

9. The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes planning goals in RCW 36.70A.020 to guide adoption of comprehensive plan amendments.
10. GMA planning goal # 12 is to “Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards” (RCW 36.70A.020(12)).
11. The GMA, at RCW 36.70A.070(3), requires that a comprehensive plan must include a capital facilities plan element consisting of:
  - a. An inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities.
  - b. A forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities.
  - c. The proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities.

- d. At least a six-year plan that will finance such capital facilities within projected funding capacities and clearly identifies sources of public money for such purposes.
  - e. A requirement to reassess the land use element if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent.
12. The existing Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, which includes the Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities 2023-2028, addresses the above GMA requirements.
  13. The subject amendments consist of updating the Six-Year CIP by adding County park and facilities projects. Updating the CIP is one step in the process of planning capital facilities to serve the people of Whatcom County.
  14. The GMA normally requires concurrent review of all comprehensive plan amendments once a year. However, there are exceptions including capital facilities plan amendments that occur along with the adoption or amendment of a county budget (RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a)(iv)). The subject Six-Year CIP amendments will be accompanied by a County budget amendment and, therefore, are not subject to the concurrent review provisions of the GMA.

### **County-Wide Planning Policies**

15. County-Wide Planning Policy K-1 indicates that, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the County must identify appropriate land for public facilities that meets the needs of the community including recreation, transportation and human service facilities.
16. The Six-Year CIP identifies such improvements as contemplated by the County Wide Planning Policies.

### **Interlocal Agreements**

17. Existing interlocal agreements between Whatcom County and the cities address joint planning for parks.
18. The County Parks' staff maintains a working relationship with appropriate staff from cities on joint park projects and planning. Therefore, the type of cooperation envisioned by the interlocal agreements is occurring.

**Further Studies/Changed Conditions**

- 19. An updated Six-Year CIP was adopted for County owned or operated facilities in 2022. The subject proposal amends the CIP to address needs identified by the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department and Facilities Management.

**Public Interest**

- 20. The goal of the Six-Year CIP is to plan for County owned or operated facilities. The proposed projects are in the public interest.

**Spot Zoning**

- 21. The subject proposal does not involve rezoning property.


**CONCLUSION**

The subject Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan amendments are consistent with the approval criteria in WCC 22.10.060.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Based upon the above findings and conclusions, the Whatcom County Planning Commission recommends approval of Exhibit A, amending the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2023-2028 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan).

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

  
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Kimberley Lund, Vice Chair

5/12/23  
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Date

  
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Tammy Axlund, Secretary

5/12/23  
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Date

Commissioners voted to recommend approval on May 11, 2023 (vote was 6-0 with 3 members absent). Members present at the meeting when the vote was taken: Kelvin Barton, Daniel Dahlquist, Stephen Jackson, Kimberley Lund, Dominic Moceri, and Scott Van Dalen.