

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

County Courthouse  
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**Satpal Singh Sidhu**  
County Executive

## Memorandum

**To:** Whatcom County Council  
**From:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
**CC:** Finance and Facility Advisory Board  
Donnell "Tank" Tanksley, Whatcom County Sheriff  
**Date:** June 17, 2026  
**RE:** Presentation of Program for New Whatcom County Jail

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I am pleased to present an outline of the program for the new Whatcom County Jail. It has been an exceptionally difficult task for the Sheriff's Office, Project Team and our consultants to condense balance, and compromise to achieve the best possible outcome under the budget constraints, while preserving our values-driven priorities.

I want to commend the Project Team, STV and our Design-Build partners for the hundreds of hours they have spent exploring our community's needs, weighing our options, and making tough recommendations as subject matter experts on how to best match our values with our means.

The proposed program outline has undergone rigorous questioning and probing from my office and the Sheriff's Office. I am confident in the professionalism of the experts we hired to guide us through this process, as well as our own experts in the Sheriff's Office, Facilities, and Health and Community Services, who I know are focused on achieving the best outcomes for those involved in our criminal justice system.

Sheriff Tanksley has confirmed that in his professional opinion, as the County's chief law enforcement officer, the current program outline is the right configuration for the new jail given our financial constraints.

We are sharing with the Council the Project Team's professional recommendation on scope-budget alignment with no changes to the program from the Executive's Office. In July we will be sharing with the Council the final program report, which will include information on operating costs. Acceptance of the program ahead of the August break is requested to allow the team to move forward into project design.

We are well aware of the ever-changing and challenging bond market, which can impact our borrowing capacity over the next 6-12 months. We will continue to keep you informed when additional policy guidance or budget authority is required.