

Whatcom County Council (Special)

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



Minutes - Final

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

9 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 9:55 AM (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Council Vice Chair Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 4 - Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

Absent: 3 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, and Ben Elenbaas

Announcements**Discussion**

[AB2024-647](#) Discussion relating to population and employment projections for the Birch Bay Urban Growth Area (UGA), Cherry Point UGA, Columbia Valley UGA and areas outside UGAs (Rural areas and Resource Lands) associated with the 2025 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Update

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Department Director, briefed the Councilmembers on the Staff Memo for this meeting and stated that Planning is recommending that Council go no lower than 9,000 for the next 20-year allocation to the rural and resource lands. He spoke about Comprehensive Plan Policy 2DD-1 and stated it is a policy they hope not to have to implement. He also spoke about the Housing for All planning tool. The cities and the County all have to plan for providing very specific densities and housing types to equate with affordability, and stated that is new since the last Comprehensive Plan update. It means the cities have more of a share in looking at county-wide growth rates, so the County cannot automatically make changes without changing their share of growth as well. That makes determining the rural growth rate more complicated than in the past. He answered what would be so bad about just addressing the discrepancy (Policy 2DD-1) now versus later, and stated they will be looking at rural study areas and the potential for changing the zoning in some of those as part of the Comprehensive Plan environmental impact statement (EIS) and it would be better to get that information first. There are very serious policy implications for future councils if they choose a very low number now and then exceed it.

Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services Department, answered questions about concerns around making sure they are fully looking at climate considerations, resiliency, vulnerability, and infrastructure in the county's UGAs, and why Planning is proposing above the high scenario for employment in those areas.

Councilmembers and staff discussed what the different scenarios might look like for people across the county, what it might look like to allocate 9,000 to rural and resource lands as opposed to 10,000, that choosing a number at this point is just a way of trying to get on the same page with the cities but does drive policy, whether setting the number to 9,000 includes the shift of growth to other locations as was specified in the last meeting's motion, what the definition of resource is as used in the term "resource lands," and what Ferndale and Lynden are talking about doing to accommodate growth for scenario two (in the memo).

Councilmembers discussed Planning moving forward with the recommended allocation number of 9,000 in rural areas. Donovan stated he would prefer to go lower to drive policy, but he does not think there is an appetite for going below the 9,000 given staff's recommendation, so he is happy with the recommendation.

Aly Pennucci, Executive's Office, stated the EIS is studying a higher number and a lower number and Council will have another opportunity to consider the number as they get more information.

Aamot stated they will take this, along with city proposals, to the Planning Commission in November and then they would hopefully bring back the resolution before the end of the year. Then in the final Comprehensive Plan, the Council would adopt the final number.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on November 19, 2024.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

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