

# **Whatcom County Council Special Committee of the Whole**

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



## **Action Summary**

**Tuesday, March 31, 2026**

**1 PM**

**Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE  
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT [www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil), OR  
CALL 360.778.5010)**

### **COUNCILMEMBERS**

Elizabeth Boyle  
Barry Buchanan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Kaylee Galloway  
Jessica Rienstra  
Jon Scanlon  
Mark Stremler

### **CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

## Call To Order

### Roll Call

**Present:** 7 - Elizabeth Boyle, Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, Jessica Rienstra, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremler

### Announcements

### Public Comment

1. [AB2026-252](#) Public comments on the draft Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8 (Resource Lands) and Chapter 9 (Parks and Recreation)

**RECEIVED**

### Committee Discussion

1. [AB2026-250](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8, Resource Lands

**DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED**

#### MOTION 1:

Motion approved to begin review of Chapter 8 using the Preliminary Council Draft dated 3.31.2026, which is the current version of the chapter with Planning Commission recommendations from January 2026 and additional edits proposed by councilmembers as listed in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes for 3.31.2026.

#### MOTION 2:

Motion approved to include Items 4 through 6 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

#### MOTION 3:

Motion approved to not include Item 7 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

#### MOTION 4:

Motion approved to hold Item 15 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) until April 7, 2026.

#### MOTION 5:

Motion approved to retain "encourage" in Policy 8E-3 (Item 30 in the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

#### MOTION 6:

Motion approved to retain the (original) language of Policy 8E-4 (Item 31) so that the policy reads as follows: "Encourage the maintenance and operation of existing drainage systems to avoid water quality and quantity impacts and retain viable agricultural land use."

#### MOTION 7:

Motion approved to hold Items 34 and 35 until April 7, 2026.

**MOTION 8:**

Motion approved to revert to the Planning Commission version of Policy 8E-7 (Item 33) so that the policy reads as follows: "Increase funding with support from State and Federal agencies to incentivize implementation of best management practices on farms and avoid adverse impacts to water quality, shellfish, and the habitat of threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species."

**MOTION 9:**

Motion approved to include Item 42 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

**MOTION 10:**

Motion approved to include Item 46 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

**MOTION 11:**

Motion approved to include Item 48 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) and add "but not limited to" so that the policy reads as follows: "Develop and implement forest management plans for county managed lands such as community forests and county forestry lands including but not limited to Lake Whatcom Park, Canyon Lake Community Forest, and Stewart Mountain Community Forest that reflect the County's values for ecological stewardship, public access, and long-term sustainability. Hire the requisite staff or contractors to develop programming and play a more active role in the management of these forest lands."

**MOTION 12:**

Motion approved to approve Item 50 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) as presented.

**MOTION 13:**

Motion approved to approve the text as stated by Councilmember Elenbaas and presented on screen for 8I-6, so that the policy states, "Further explore opportunities for off-grid living and its benefits associated with the Rural Forestry interface," and not move forward with Items 8I-7 and 8I-8 at this time.

**MOTION 14:**

Motion approved to revert back to the Planning Commission language in Item 61 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes) so that it reads: "Use of forestlands can impact habitat, including riparian areas, stream flows, channel habitat structure, and water quality."

**MOTION 15:**

Motion approved to include Item 63 (from the Chart of Proposed Council Changes).

**MOTION 16:**

Motion approved to amend Goal 8Q as follows: "Subject to Federal and State regulations, support strategic sediment removal from river bars and stream channels when necessary for flood control management or environmental mitigation purposes when deemed appropriate as part of a larger strategic plan laid out by governmental agencies and appropriate stakeholders where adverse hydrologic and other environmental impacts are avoided or minimized."

**MOTION 17:**

Motion approved to hold 8-45(7) (Item 68) until April 7 to give Planning and Development Services time to reach out to Public Works.

2. [AB2026-251](#) Discussion and preliminary Council direction on Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 9, Parks and Recreation
- DISCUSSED**

**Items Added by Revision**

**Other Business**

**Adjournment**