

Whatcom County Council Public Works & Health Committee

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

1:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 2:15 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

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

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Elizabeth Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2026-375](#) Update from the Whatcom Food Bank Network regarding funding and local food insecurity data

Mike Cohen, Bellingham Food Bank Executive Director, read from a presentation (on file) on the Whatcom Food Bank Network, their funding history with Whatcom County and that the number of clients has grown massively in the last few years (in 2021-2024 food bank visits tripled), that they will again be seeking support from the County over the next biennium, that hunger is a public health issue that spans the breadth of the county, the demographics of those utilizing the food banks, and how the food banks help the community.

Councilmembers and Cohen discussed the fact stated in the presentation that 25 percent of Whatcom County residents are shoppers at the food bank, if there are efficiencies of the food bank's operation that allow them to get food to people cheaper because they can buy in bulk than if they were just giving people cash, that there was a decrease in visits in 2025 compared to 2024 because there were some food banks in the network that had to cut their programming, that it has been great working with the Healthy Children's Fund dollars, and that the fund has improved lives in many different ways.

Boyle stated she appreciated the quote from Cohen's presentation that they have worked really hard to make accessing our food banks as "easy and dignified as possible," and she also observed that when she toured the facility.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2026-389](#) Resolution establishing the existing Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee as the Ferry Advisory Committee for the Ferry District [Council acting as the Whatcom

County Ferry District Board of Supervisors]

Roland Middleton, Public Works Department, briefed the councilmembers and stated the recent changes in state law that allowed the ferry district to be a vehicle ferry also had a provision with regard to a ferry advisory committee. One of the things it stated is that if a county is transitioning from a county owned ferry system to a ferry district, the existing locally established ferry advisory committee fulfills the requirements of needing an advisory body. It does not limit their action in the future to make necessary modifications. Public Works plans to have a work session with the Council in July to go through what the state law says because the county is moving from an advisory committee that is talking about operations and details to a ferry taxing district that is covering the entire county. They want to make sure the entire county is represented in the appropriate way. After the Council decides what they want, Public Works will draft an ordinance to make any needed changes. This resolution just makes sure we are in compliance with state law.

He and councilmembers discussed that the time sensitivity for this is just that it has to be done “promptly,” that the ferry advisory committee would keep some of its existing work as those who ride the ferry and inform the operations but that they would also advise the Council on the taxing aspect of a taxing district, and that there are two vacancies right now on the existing committee for those representing the unincorporated county.

Scanlon moved and Boyle seconded that the Resolution be
RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

Stremmer stated without changing the makeup of the current advisory committee, he thinks it would be a rough go, so he is looking forward to the workshop and to working on the composition of the new advisory committee.

**Scanlon's motion that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR
APPROVAL carried by the following vote:**

Aye: 7 - Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremmer

Nay: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Elizabeth Boyle-via email 6/3/2026

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Elizabeth Boyle, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger

SIGNED COPY ON FILE