



MEMORANDUM

TO: WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
FROM: CATHY HALKA, CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2024
RE: COUNCIL MEETING LOGISTICS DISCUSSION (AB2024-510)

During Council discussion on [AB2024-420](#), an ordinance to make all council committees 7 members (instead of 3), councilmembers asked about other meeting logistics changes to achieve their goals. A discussion of councilmember goals was held on August 15, 2024 ([AB2024-510](#)), including the following:

- Be more efficient
- Have more meeting time to consider complicated issues
- Create avenues for councilmembers to work collaboratively
- More regular discussion opportunities
- More scrutiny on what goes on an agenda
- Edit agendas before they are published to make sure there is enough time to deal with issues
- Have a single vote during the day on things that are not controversial
- Vote once instead of repeating votes (in day and then again at night)
- Find efficiencies with presentations

Note: some of the aforementioned goals may conflict with each other)

In consideration of the aforementioned goals, the following ideas are offered as a starting place for Council consideration:

1. 7-member Committees
 - o For all committees OR only select committees
 - o Reduces quorum issues, allows for collaboration outside of a public meeting
 - o Could increase number of times an item is discussed. 7-member committees make a recommendation to the Council (of 7)
2. Final action in 1 or more committee/s, e.g. Finance and Administrative Services Committee
 - o If 7-member committee, final action in committee could work
 - o Public notice of final action to be taken in committee
 - o RCW requires public comment at all meetings where final action is taken. Note: public comment could extend time needed for committee.
 - o Ordinance to establish final action in committee
 - o May shorten evening meeting time
3. Add 6 Committee of the Whole meetings
 - o Held alongside 6 scheduled Health Board meetings
 - o Provides additional council discussion time
 - o Schedule may be 9-10am Committee of the Whole before a 10am-12pm Health Board meeting
 - o 1-hour Committee of the Whole could accommodate 2-3 presentations/discussions

4. Reduce the number of committees (from 5 to fewer)
 - Whatcom County Code 2.02.075 specifies 5 standing committees. A code change by ordinance or a council motion to refer all items from one committee to another may be appropriate.
 - Fewer committees could make it difficult for presenters to accurately estimate time to show up for committee agenda items and for members of the public to watch a specific agenda item
5. Eliminate Water Work Session meetings and move agenda items to Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee or Public Works and Health as appropriate
 - Consolidates 10 Water Work Session meetings into the Council's regular meeting schedule
 - Holds important topic items on a regular and more prominent Council meeting day
6. Follow intended path of ordinance.
 - Path of ordinance is to introduce, then 2-weeks later discussion in committee and action in Council on same day. After substantive changes item may need to be re-introduced at a subsequent meeting
 - Reduces extra discussions in committee for ordinances
 - Provides predictability for staff and the public of when an ordinance will be considered
 - Public hearing items are introduced, then 2 weeks later the hearing and Council action take place in Council on the same day
7. Time limits on councilmember updates, e.g. 3 minutes each
 - More efficient with evening meeting time
8. Time limits on presentations and reports
 - Limit all presentation times to 20 minutes or less
 - Exceptions approved by the Clerk/Chair
 - Hold all CM questions till the end of the presentation
9. Agenda review/approval by Committee Chair
 - Limit presentation time
 - Remove items to achieve desired committee time