

**Whatcom County
Council Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee**

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



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

**Tuesday, January 10, 2023
9:50 AM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 10:25 A.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON,
SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil,
OR CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Member Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, and Kaylee Galloway

Absent: None

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Carol Frazey, and Kathy Kershner

Announcements

Special Order of Business

1. [AB2023-049](#) Nomination and appointment of Committee Chair

Donovan moved that Galloway be NOMINATED AND APPOINTED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Donovan, Elenbaas, and Galloway

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Galloway was appointed as Committee Chair and continued to chair the meeting.

Committee Discussion

1. [AB2023-004](#) Update from the Forestry Advisory Committee

Joshua Fleischmann, Planning and Development Services Department, introduced the presentation.

John Gold, Forestry Advisory Committee Chair, presented, highlighted information that might be missing from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) materials and stated the advisory committee urges the Council to request that specific information. That analysis would allow them to make a reasonable, sound, and informed judgment.

Elenbaas asked Gold whether he has read the proposed letter from Councilmember Galloway that she is proposing the Council send to DNR, whether he would personally put his name on that letter, the direction that the Forestry Advisory Committee would give regarding the letter, and whether he has seen the alternate letter proposed by Councilmember

Kershner.

Galloway stated the letter Elenbaas was referring to is going to be considered next on the agenda and requested that Councilmembers limit questions to the Forestry Advisory Committee to general direction and strategy.

Elenbaas stated if he could give the Forestry Advisory Committee his recommendation on policy direction, it would be to make sure that the forestry economy is sustainable and robust for the future.

Galloway spoke about getting an evaluation and updated viewing of the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan and making sure they have the Forestry Advisory Committee's perspective if there are opportunities for increasing compliance monitoring or expanding the membership of the inter-jurisdictional committee. She would also like to get the advisory committee's input on the \$100,000 budget amendment approved by the Council for the Parks Department and their efforts toward forest management plans for Lake Whatcom Park, Canyon Lake Community Forest, and Stewart Mountain. Finally, she spoke about continuing to push for a joint meeting of the Forestry Advisory Committee and Climate Impact Advisory Committee.

Susan David, Forestry Advisory Committee Vice Chair, presented on some of the projects that the advisory committee is thinking about prioritizing for this year. She stated they would like to request that they have periodic attendance at this meeting to give the Council input.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2023-048](#) Discussion and approval of letter regarding Whatcom County's response to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources regarding Phase II of the Carbon Project

Galloway updated the Councilmembers that there is a "Revised Draft Letter (Galloway) 1.10.23" (on file) and an alternate version sent in by Kershner (on file as "Alternate Letter (Kershner) 1.10.2023"). She gave her perspective on her version of the letter, stated there is value in the County's communication with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and spoke about making sure they are engaging all the right members of our community while being responsive to a tight timeline for submitting Council's feedback.

Chris Elder, Public Works Department, answered what the deadline is for the input.

Galloway gave background on her version of the letter, and stated that she tried to incorporate feedback from both the Climate Impact Advisory Committee and the Forestry Advisory Committee, and that she tried to reconcile the complexity of the issues.

Kershner spoke about her version of the letter and stated it is more skeptical of the process and asks more questions. She is not willing to wholeheartedly support including the four parcels in the program without further review of the questions in her letter.

Councilmembers discussed whether they know for certain that “This recommendation is also made with the understanding that the Carbon Project will generate millions of dollars in revenue and not negatively impact local beneficiaries such as Mount Baker and Nooksack Valley School Districts” as stated in Galloway’s revised letter, and whether they can guarantee the revenue will be at least the same.

Frazezy spoke about making sure questions are included in the letter about what the actual lease areas are for each candidate parcel, what management activities (if any) are permissible under the carbon leases, and how this will impact the revenue to the trust land beneficiaries. She wants to guarantee that the school district has the funds that they have always had.

Elenbaas stated a concern with the Carbon Project is that the state of Washington does not do a great job of staying away from the burn cycle which will release massive amounts of carbon. He tends to lean more toward Kershner’s letter and would like to send something that looks like that as a minority report if the Council decides to send Galloway’s letter. He believes they could probably offset the beneficiary revenue with carbon credits but it does not address loss of forestry-related jobs.

Kershner spoke about whether there is data about the statement in Galloway’s letter that “the Carbon Project will generate millions of dollars in revenue and not negatively impact local beneficiaries such as Mount Baker and Nooksack Valley School Districts,” where we would harvest if they continue to say we cannot harvest in more and more areas, and being leery of this project when we do not know the details on how it will affect our junior taxing districts, and do not know how much carbon it will actually

reduce. She hopes they do not support this as a Council and would like to propose her alternate letter as a minority report to the Board of Natural Resources (BNR).

Elenbaas suggested they do a pilot project and prove that it works somewhere else. It will not be worth the cost to our community.

Galloway suggested the Councilmembers give her time to put together another letter that would include components from both versions and should focus on the need to consult counties on these projects and future forestry issues.

Councilmembers discussed whether there is a deadline for their response and concurred to forward this item to Council without a committee recommendation.

This agenda item was FORWARDED TO COUNCIL WITHOUT A RECOMMENDATION.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription