

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, February 20, 2024

1:15 PM

Hybrid Meeting

HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 1:50 P.M. (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL 360.778.5010)

COUNCILMEMBERS

Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Chair Jon Scanlon called the meeting to order at 11:15 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Kaylee Galloway, Jon Scanlon, and Mark Stremmler

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, and Ben Elenbaas

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2024-133](#) Coordinated Water System Plan Update

Sue Sullivan, Health and Community Services, read from a presentation (on file as "Plan Update").

Donovan stated there is a bigger issue here about what the zoning capacity is allowing in these areas that are running out of water. He asked whether these places should be down-zoned to accommodate or reflect the reality of diminishing groundwater supplies or whether other places might be up-zoned to compensate for that. It may be beyond the Coordinated Water System Plan, but he asked how we get a connection between this problem, that is probably going to persist and get worse, and land use. He also asked about rules for interties.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, stated this is a bigger issue. We are running into the housing crisis and buildable land and this is part of that. He suggested they bring the Planning Department, the PUD and the Health Department together and suggest some reforms.

Chris Heimgartner, Whatcom Public Utility District (PUD), spoke about the 1992 resolution. He stated since 1992, no utility has failed in Whatcom County, so, in a sense, it was very premature. But the people in 1992 knew what was going to happen eventually and it happened last year. There are not any limits on what you can do in terms of helping one of these small utilities; it is bound by finances. And in these cases, the help was too expensive so they chose to go a different way. But it is a longstanding problem that is probably going to get worse and needs all the right people identified.

Dave Olson, Water System Services, answered whether the four

associations affected by the drought were the only four in the entire county, and stated these were the obvious ones that did not have advanced monitoring. There are others, that have more sophisticated monitoring ability and management skills, that were at or near the precipice of more problems. He answered why it was concentrated in one general geographic area and whether there was something going on in that particular area. He stated if you were to look at a general North/South axis roughly through that area (extending further north of the impacted area and further south of the area) there is a general trend of declining static water level. The overall water table is dropping over time. One association was able to go deeper (which is their obligation under water right practice and policy) and address their problem.

Sullivan stated Council will see a draft interlocal agreement (ILA) next quarter and then the final draft of the Coordinated Water System Plan for review, hopefully by the end of the year or early 2025.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Jon Scanlon-via email 2/29/2024

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Jon Scanlon, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE

