

Whatcom County Council Committee of the Whole

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



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

3:45 PM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 4:30 P.M.; MAY BEGIN EARLY
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON AT 311 GRAND AVENUE SUITE 105, SEE REMOTE
JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL
360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Council Chair Todd Donovan called the meeting to order at 3:46 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, and Kaylee Galloway

Absent: 1 - Kathy Kershner

Announcements**Committee Discussion**

1. [AB2022-717](#) Discussion regarding the Council's general meeting rules

Frazey spoke about why she brought the item forward.

Councilmembers discussed having a two-minute public comment speaking limit, having a more systemic conversation about what their role is as the Legislative branch, increasing their capabilities to engage the community, whether they could conduct a study or evaluation about how things are done, and whether changes could be made to honor everyone's time as well as civic engagement.

They discussed ideas including having committee meetings on one day and Council meeting on another day, keeping the open public comment period in the beginning of the meetings to give the opportunity for people to speak to them on topics they may be voting on later, putting a time limit on the open public comment period, better articulating in advance of public comment who the Council is and what topics are related to them, analyzing how much of Council's time on a Council day is spent in open session, not changing anything from what they are doing, doing a half an hour of public comment at the beginning of the meeting and finishing after they are done with their agenda, having more public comment in committee meetings, identifying concerns about agenda items and better communicating information about them prior to the meetings, trying different things out to see how they work, and asking speakers to sign up to speak so they can be called down and ready at the podium to save time.

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive, spoke in favor of an organized open session, and suggested an idea that if someone speaks on a topic at one meeting, they have to take a break for one or two meetings to speak on that topic again.

Councilmembers discussed the ideas.

Elenbaas moved to have sign-up sheets for both open session and public hearings. The motion was seconded by Buchanan.

Elenbaas stated that he does not want it to be limited only to people who sign up and Councilmembers spoke about it not being mandatory.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Frazey, and Galloway

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 - Kershner

Councilmembers discussed learning from other jurisdictions as well as evaluating the current system, trying to diversify the way people can engage, ensuring they honor decorum rules around keeping Council Chambers respectful and inclusive, Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) guidance for public comment, how other councils break up their day in terms of committees versus public hearings, what they could put on a different day if they broke it up, the Executive hosting his own biweekly Executive comment time for things about which people want to speak to him or the Administration, providing a document to help people understand who the Council is and what they do and what other entities are out there so they know where to go with their comments, and establishing an advisory panel to help speakers come together to engage on a topic they are passionate about and to give them the ability to work on it in a way that is meaningful and helpful to what they are trying to achieve so they can then provide information to the Council.

Elenbaas moved that, in order to alleviate confusion about the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Council, we move the County seat from Bellingham to the City of Ferndale. The motion failed for lack of a second.

This agenda item was DISCUSSED AND MOTION(S) APPROVED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

The County Council approved these minutes on January 10, 2023.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE