

**Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee
September 25, 2024, 6 p.m.**

Bold text indicates Committee decision expected. Asterisk* indicates attachment.

6:00 p.m. CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| · Janice Catrell | · Diane Harper | · Thomas Philpot |
| · Richard Frye | · Todd Lagestee | · Catherine Shornick |
| · Pam Gould | · Carol Landt | · Uninc area position |

FLAG SALUTE and MOMENT OF SILENCE

Welcome to committee members, county staff and community, including:

Laura Frolich, Public Works
Roland Middleton, Public Works
Gary Poole, Ferry Master
Jon Scanlon, County Council

BUSINESS MEETING

- **Accept Agenda**
- **Adopt Minutes, August 28, 2024***

6:10 COMMITTEE WORK

- WCFAC member terms and open seats, follow-up*
- ad hoc Access Committee, update
- ad hoc Ferry and Terminal Committee, update
- ad hoc Level of Service Committee (LOS), update

6:50 NEW BUSINESS

- Public Works, Operations Budget Update, Laura Frolich
- Climate Advisory Committee, Charles Bailey

7:20 OPEN SESSION

7:45 ADJOURN

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

- October 23, 2024, WCFAC meeting

Location: The Gathering Place – 3913 Legoe Bay Road, Lummi Island

This is an in-person meeting only.

Attachments: August 28 minutes; WCFAC terms; Climate Advisory Committee, letter to CC

Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee
August 28, 2024
Minutes

6:00 p.m. CALL TO ORDER – Pam Gould, Chair

Present: Janice Catrell, Richard Frye, Pam Gould, Diane Harper, Todd Lagestee, Tom Philpot, Catherine Shornick

Absent: Carol Landt

Welcome to Laura Frolich, Public Works Assistant Director and Ferry Manager

Agenda, stands; Minutes from July 24, 2024, adopted

COMMITTEE WORK

- **Motion on ferry operational reports 2022 and 2023:** Diane Harper reviewed request for financial information (see attached). *Motion (Harper; Lagestee second): WCFAC requests that fiscal year 2022 and 2023 Ferry Operation Reports be issued by Whatcom County Public Works that at a minimum include the updated version of the six pages identified below in the 2021 report. (The 2022 report need not include the columns showing projections, but the 2023 report should do so).*
 - Page 5 – Summary of Revenues
 - Page 6 – Summary of Expenses
 - Page 7 – Overview of Ferry Fund Balance
 - Page 11 – Analysis of Vessel Rental Rate (the only way dry-dock information is available)
 - Page 13 – Ridership Statistics
 - Page 15 – Appendix A – Income Statement

We recognize that it will be necessary to include a cautionary note in these reports to explain why the past years' finances differ from what was presented in the 2013-2021 Reports. Motion passed unanimously among those present; to be sent to Public Works (PW).
- **WCFAC member terms and open seats, follow-up:** Chair Pam Gould will bring a draft resolution to next meeting, in order to request term appointments that allow for only one-third of members rotating off each year, rather than the current 50%.
- **Punch card exchange dates recommendation:** The next exchange opportunity is on the regular punch card sale date. Concerns include staff time and expenses for exchanges over the summer, inability of people off-island to exchange cards and lack of an option to mail in cards for exchange, absence of any expiration dates on the cards, and another increase anticipated in January. Laura Frolich reported that calculations are necessary in person, so problems arise when mailed-in checks are inaccurate. PW is aware of inconveniences; it's possible an automated system could be developed. Todd Lagastee called attention to the intent of RCW 19.240, specifically regarding expiration language on gift cards¹, and urged a close review of that regulation.

¹ RCW19.240 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise. (1)(a) "Gift card" means a record as described in subsection (5)[(2)] of this section in the form of a card, or a stored value card or other physical medium, containing stored value primarily intended to be exchanged for consumer goods and services...

- **WCFAC discussion, draft letter on replacement ferry costs and funding:** Diane H. reviewed presentation (see attached), noting that a smaller hybrid ferry could still allow for the RAISE grant and state funds, but with financial gap closer to \$4M. Discussion included the importance of both moving quickly and exploring other alternatives including Bellingham facilities and battery supplies in Marysville. Pam G. reported that State Senator Sharon Shewmake said at a recent Town Hall that we need to ask for additional funds. Todd L. expressed concerns about wording of the draft letter, suggesting that the WCFAC could *support the actions* rather than requesting them. Unfortunately, time does not allow for a full rewrite. Laura F. underscored hopes for a solution-oriented working session in September, after which PW may bring a proposal to the County Council (CC). PW is in a position to justify revenue alternatives, although PSE does not appear to be ready for electrification. Laura hopes for a viable and realistic decision. *Motion (Harper; Frye second): WCFAC will forward letter to County Council as drafted, with an additional item #4, investigate local building facilities and battery supply options; and to change 'request' to 'recommend'.* Motion passed with five in favor (one no, one absent, one no vote recorded).
- **ad hoc Access Committee, update:** Pam G. deferred report, while noting that Kim Boon passed on her spreadsheet of entities/stakeholders to Carol L., and the LI Fire Department provided a consolidated report of fuel needs and emergency responses. Work continues.
- **ad hoc Ferry and Terminal Committee, update:** Tom Philpott reviewed financial projections surrounding a smaller vessel that would help close a funding gap and may still allow for the RAISE grant (see attachment); he asked if KPFF could develop a 24-car hybrid vessel.
- **WCFAC discussion on updating Level of Service (LOS) recommendation:** Diane H. reviewed LOS history (see attachment). One of WCFAC's jobs is to review the resolution CC adopted in 2018, when costs over and above the vessel were not considered might have changed recommendations. *Motion (Harper; Philpott second): WCFAC form a limited ad hoc committee to consider updating the 2017 LIFAC recommendation, and to bring a recommendation to the September WCFAC meeting.* Motion passed unanimously among those present. The community will be asked for input as to how to address LOS; former LIFAC members Charles Bailey and Rhayma Blake are willing to serve on the ad hoc.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Laura Frolich briefly described her background that includes earth sciences and water conservation and resources, and a Master's in Public Administration. She expressed gratitude for the work of WCFAC, acknowledging that things are happening quickly regarding cost escalations and the need to secure funding sources.

Gary Poole, Ferry Master, thanked Laura F. for making his job easier since her arrival, noting that she strives for systems to work. Ticket sales will include exchanges on September 4th; more combined events may occur depending on how this one goes. It was surprising how many punchcards were submitted—over 4,000 lines of data were recorded. The ferry will have a service outage on September 18th for dock inspection, during which time the crew will participate in much needed safety drills. No date is set for the next drydock; however, it is hoped that a possible two-year commitment could make things simpler.

Gary and Laura commented on a recent Ferry Summit they both attended, including how various systems compared and possibilities of lobbying Olympia together. Differences include LOS (earlier shutdowns at end of day), emergency services (one system has a separate vessel), and private services that provide crew (off-island). Gary observed that it is a huge benefit to islanders that our crew members live on-island, particularly for emergencies.

OPEN SESSION

Bob Anderson expressed concerns surrounding the reality of receiving state and RAISE funds and having all funding in place by July 2025. He urged PW and WCFAC to pursue answers posed earlier, but also to look at a shorter term (seven to ten years), reconditioned vessel that fits existing docks. This would allow for aligning funds and other forces and resolving issues.

Charles Bailey thanked and welcomed Laura F, noting the deep well of talent within the island crew, community and committee. He served on LIFAC and worked on the earlier LOS, but pointed out that a smaller ferry would actually better serve the LOS. The focus should be on the funding gap; it is up to CC to take action (no action is an action). He urged replacing the vessel with a smaller design that would not require new terminals and would qualify for the RAISE grant. He asked that all options be considered but to act soon.

Jim Dickinson questioned how many vehicles realistically could be transported in any hour. The county, state and feds are broke now but will come back. The Hiyu is \$1.85M, uses less fuel, produces less pollution, has good spacing for cars, and docks could be renovated differently. A real vetting of the Hiyu is needed.

Tom Hodges raised the consideration of trip reductions, asking if coordination could occur with Whatcom Transit and other options to move people more than vehicles. Regarding punch cards, some people simply cannot be on site; is it ok for the county to simply keep their money (of unused cards)? There is no indication on the ticket that they expire.

[Laura F. responded that it sounds like a legal question. Gary P. observed that the exchange is new for everyone; some people were actually yelling at the ferry crew during exchange events. **He urged people to remember that the crew is trying to help and to please work with them.**]

David Kershner agreed in large part with Jim and Bob; there is nothing to lose in requesting a revision or extension for the RAISE grants from DOT. It's possible [with a smaller vessel] the gap could be less than \$5M.

Meeting adjourned.

Upcoming

- September 25th, WCFAC meeting.

Attachments:

- WCFAC July 24, 2024, Minutes (note: submitted with attachments earlier for County posting)
- Harper, Ferry Operational Reports

- Draft Letter on Replacement Ferry Costs and Funding
- Tom Philpott report from ad hoc
- LOS review

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Submitted by C. Shornick

Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3149/WCFAC-Reports-and-Additional-Information>

Membership: 9 voting members appointed by County Council

5 members live on the island.

2 members who live in unincorporated Whatcom County.

2 members who live anywhere on the mainland (incorporated or unincorporated, priority given to 1 Lummi Nation member when possible)

1 County Council member (ad hoc non-voting)

Terms: Members serve 3-year terms. Each member is limited to 2 terms, with 1-year separation required before applying again.

WCFAC terms as they were appointed have 5 ending this January.

position	term ends			current member
	1/31/2025	1/31/2026	1/31/2027	
1	island			Pamela Gould
2	island			Diane Harper
3			island	Thomas Philpot
4			island	Catherine Shornick
5	island			Richard Frye*
6	mainland			Janice Cattrell
7	mainland			Todd Lagerstee*
8		unincorp.		Carol Landt
9		unincorp.		Vacant

If the terms are adjusted as shown for positions 1, 7, and 9; only three of the nine positions rotate each year. This also allows the mainland and unincorporated areas to have a continuing representative.

position	suggested shifts in term end			current member
	1/31/2025	1/31/2026	1/31/2027	
1		island		Pamela Gould
2	island			Diane Harper
3			island	Thomas Philpot
4			island	Catherine Shornick
5	island			Richard Frye*
6	mainland			Janice Cattrell
7		mainland		Todd Lagerstee*
8		unincorp.		Carol Landt
9			unincorp.	Vacant

* already has served one full term

September 23, 2024

Dear Whatcom County Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee (CIAC) to advise Council to adopt a resolution opposing Initiative 2117 (I-2117) on the Nov. 5th ballot.

I-2117 would repeal the Washington Climate Commitment Act (CCA). The CCA, which became law in 2021, places a cap on statewide emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) through the auction of allowances (permits to emit GHGs), with the number of allowances available declining over time to achieve the emission reduction goals set under RCW 70A.45.020.

The Climate Commitment Act is a critical policy tool in the fight against climate change and CIAC strongly opposes its repeal. The CCA achieves limits on GHG emissions at the lowest possible cost. It channels these revenues to promote environmental justice and the CCA auctions have generated \$1.67 billion in revenue for over 2,300 projects supporting climate mitigation and adaptation across Washington.

In Whatcom County, the CCA has already delivered significant revenue: [\\$92 million across 87 projects](#)ⁱⁱⁱ has already been appropriated in Whatcom County. Some examples include:

- \$6.7 million to Whatcom Transportation Authority to adopt a zero-fare policy for riders under 18ⁱⁱⁱ
- \$45,000 to Whatcom County Public Works for zero-fare policy for riders under 18 for the *Whatcom Chief*^v
- \$2.7 million in Climate Planning grant funding to Whatcom County jurisdictions to support integration of HB 1181 into the Comprehensive Plan^v
- \$1.3 million in Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate funding to Bellingham and Whatcom County
- 19 new electric vehicle charging stations in Whatcom County funded through the Washington Electric Vehicle Charging Program^{vi}
- Free youth fares available for Amtrak Cascades
- Lake Whatcom Watershed Forest Conservation
- Clean Hydrogen Hub with federal and state funding to support 17 projects, including in Whatcom County

Repeal of the Climate Commitment Act will shut off future revenue to these initiatives. Repeal would also remove a significant source of state funds for major climate-friendly capital projects, including for example, the current county funding gap of \$47 million for the Lummi Island Ferry Replacement and System Modernization Project. More generally, repeal of the CCA would also hobble funding to implement other measures in the Whatcom County Climate Action Plan.

The CIAC is specifically responsible under Whatcom County Code 2.126.030(I) “to make recommendations relevant to Whatcom County’s climate change mitigation and impact prevention, adaptation, and preparation goals to the Whatcom County Council and the Whatcom County Executive regarding state and federal policy priorities.” For this reason, we are advising you to Council to adopt a resolution supporting the continuation of the Climate Commitment Act by opposing I-2117 on the November 5th ballot.

Thank you for your consideration.

Phil Thompson- Chair, Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee
Approved 10-0-0 by the Climate Impacts Advisory Committee at 9-18-24 Meeting

ⁱ <https://climate.wa.gov/washington-climate-action-work/climate-commitment-act-polluters-pay-communities-benefit/cca-dashboard-climate-commitment-act-projects-awards-and-appropriations>

ⁱⁱ <https://climate.wa.gov/washington-climate-action-work/climate-commitment-act-projects-and-programs>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/grant-programs-and-awards/transit-support-grant>

^{iv} <https://whatcom.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13280230&GUID=2E4497C6-3E32-4C5B-80AA-291BA1791BF5>

^v <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/9dstm9ob1yf3jwcp15ox60w0cmielscv>

^{vi} <https://waevcharging.org/dashboard>