

History of the Whatcom County Charter

(The color of the table following each date of amendment corresponds to the color of the printed charter booklet)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHARTER

In 1978, voters elected to approve a home rule charter to govern Whatcom County. At least every 10 years after the adoption of the charter, a 15-member Charter Review Commission is elected to:

- o Enhance government efficiency
- o Evaluate possible changes
- o Provide a forum for public input
- o Review the charter to determine its adequacy and suitability to the needs of the county
- o Review the existing structure of government

The Commission may propose amendments to the charter, make recommendations to the County Council, and publish its findings.

All Sections in 1978

1983: A Mini-Initiative to County Council, for a Charter amendment is on file with the Auditor's Office. It was to reduce council membership from 7 members to 5 or less and to delete the executive branch and substitute a County Council Administrator.

It apparently did not go on the ballot based on notes written by the Auditor's Office: "'Invalid' written on file folder. Note in file: 'Sponsors ask Council to place on ballot; denied.'"

No changes made	No changes made
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AMENDED BY REFERENDUM ON NOVEMBER 3, 1986

Fourteen proposed amendments were forwarded by the Charter Review Commission and put on the ballot. Ten of them were approved by the voters. The sections amended were:

1.10	2.22	3.21
3.22	3.24	3.26
3.53	4.10	4.20
4.30	**4.50 (an assumed deletion)	5.40
5.42	5.65	8.11
8.12	**4.11 (an assumed deletion)	

AMENDED BY ORDINANCE 93-046 ON JULY 27, 1993

Ordinance 93-046 was adopted by the Council to fix scrivener's errors. The sections amended were:

4.30	5.40
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AMENDED BY BALLOT MEASURE ON NOVEMBER 2, 1993

Three proposed amendments were put on the ballot and two of those (Ord. 93-043 and Ord. 93-045) were approved by the voters. A new Charter was not printed at this time. Instead, an insert was added to the 1986 version. The sections amended were:

3.52	8.11	
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AMENDED BY REFERENDUM ON NOVEMBER 7, 1995

Twelve proposed amendments were forwarded by the Charter Review Commission and put on the ballot, and eight of them were approved by the voters. One ordinance was put forward and considered by the Council (AB95-454) but was not adopted, and never went to the voters. The sections amended were:

Preamble	1.11	1.50
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1.51	2.24	5.40
5.60	6.41	8.11
8.22	8.23	

AMENDED BY BALLOT MEASURE ON NOVEMBER 4, 1997

One proposed amendment was put on the ballot (Ord. 97-042) and was approved by the voters. The sections amended were:

6.05	6.10	6.20
6.30	6.41	6.60
6.73	6.80	6.90

(NO AMENDMENTS)

February 23, 1999: On February 23, 1999 an Ordinance was introduced in Council: "Ordinance amending the Whatcom County Charter with regards to changing the configuration of the Whatcom County Council to establish 5 full time members on the Council with salaries not to exceed 55% of the County Executive. This ordinance would be placed on the ballot for the November 1999 general election to be submitted to the people for approval." The Ordinance seemed to have three versions and was discussed in committee and ultimately referred back to committee on April 20, 1999 in Council. It is under Agenda Bill AB1999-090. See Ballot Measure on November 4, 1997 section to see the ordinance and associated minutes.

(NO AMENDMENTS)

November 27, 2001: On November 27, 2001 Councilmember Crawford Introduced an "Ordinance proposing an amendment to the charter re: election by district" On December 11, 2001 the Ordinance failed in Council. See AB2001-399. See Ballot Measure on November 4, 1997 section to see the ordinance and associated minutes.

AMENDED BY ORDINANCE ON OCTOBER 11, 2005

Ordinance 2005-075 was adopted by the Council to fix scrivener's errors. The changes did not get into the printed version of the Charter at that time. There were a couple notations referring to the Ordinance, but the changes to the text were not made until 2007 and printed in the 2008 version. The sections amended were:

1.10	1.20	1.30
1.40	2.10	2.11
2.12	2.13	2.14
2.20	2.21	2.23
2.24	2.30	2.40
2.50	2.60	3.10
3.22	3.30	3.51
3.52	4.10	4.20
4.50	4.60	5.50
6.20	6.40	6.50
6.60	6.90	7.10
7.20	8.20	8.22
8.24	9.50	9.60

AMENDED BY REFERENDUM ON NOVEMBER 8, 2005

Twenty-four amendments were proposed by the Charter Review Commission and six were forwarded to the Council and put on the ballot. Five of those were approved by the voters. The strike version of the charter in the Council Office drive did not match the amendments on the ballot (i.e. 3.52). The phrase "as part of these duties" was added at some point but it is not clear when, how, or why. Also, the phrase "and maintain voter rolls and records" is in both versions but in a different place in the sentence structure. The peach and Teal printed version matches the amendments on the ballot **except the peach version does not have the change in section 4.50. The word "last" was not printed and remained unprinted till a scrivener fix in 2017. The teal version includes it, but the lavender version does not. The sections amended were:

1.11	2.13	2.23
3.52	4.50**	

AMENDED BY BALLOT MEASURE ON NOVEMBER 4, 2008

One proposed amendment was put on the ballot (Ord. 2007-069) and was approved by the voters. The sections amended were:

2.13

**Note: the word "last" inadvertently removed from this version in section 4.5 in the second line of the second paragraph (see 2015)

AMENDED BY BALLOT MEASURE ON NOVEMBER 8, 2011

One proposed amendment was put on the ballot (Ord. 2011-026) and was approved by the voters. The changes were reflected by an insert into the lavender 2005 version, and then incorporated and reprinted with a green cover. The sections amended were:

2.20	3.21	3.51
6.100		

AMENDED BY REFERENDUM AND ORDINANCE ON NOVEMBER 3, 2015

Eight proposed amendments were forwarded by the Charter Review Commission and put on the ballot, and all eight of them were approved by the voters. Two proposed amendments were forwarded by the Council (Ord. 2015-029 and Ord. 2015-032) and put on the ballot and were approved by the voters. In March of 2016, a scrivener's error was discovered and fixed in section 2.11. Old language existed referring to "commissioners." The language was stricken and the Charter reprinted (still pink). In early 2017 it was noticed that the notation "Amended by referendum in 2015" had been added by Code Publishing to several sections that were *not* amended in the online version only (our printed version never had these errors). The online Charter was fixed by Code Publishing. Then, after a reference scrub of our printed version (in February 2017 and then again in April 2017), several other section notation errors for various years were found and fixed as scrivener's errors both online and in print. The sections amended in the 2015 referendum were:

2.11	2.12	2.13
2.14	3.21	5.40
5.60	8.21	8.22
8.23	**2.11 Language Fix	

The sections amended in February 2107 to fix the various section notations were:

2.13	3.21	3.51	3.52	6.05	6.41
6.73	8.11	8.22	2.20	6.10	6.20
6.30	6.60	6.80	6.90	6.100	

**Note: The word "last" was added back in as a scrivener's error fix in section 4.50, second sentence of the second paragraph. It was added in 2005 by referendum and inadvertently taken back off sometime later.

The book was reprinted with a sage green cover to show all changes. Sections amended in April 2017 to fix section notations were:

3.22	8.22
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(NO AMENDMENTS)

November 2017: On November 21, 2017, two amendments were brought before the Council for Introduction. AB2017-356 proposed an amendment to charter section 8.23 and AB2017-357 proposed an amendment to charter section 2.13. Both were not introduced. See Referendum November 3, 2015 section.

No changes made	No changes made
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AMENDED BY ORDINANCE ON JULY 23, 2019

July 2019: On July 23, 2019 Council adopted Ordinance 2019-058 to amend language where the passage of time has rendered it to be moot or obsolete. Changes were added to the existing charter via an inserted page to use up already printed green charter books, and then the Charter was reprinted with a gold cover. The sections amended were:

4.20	6.90
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AMENDED BY BALLOT MEASURE ON NOVEMBER 2, 2021

May 2021: On May 4, 2021 two ordinances were introduced (AB2021-278 and AB2021-279) submitting to the voters a proposal to amend 5.40, 5.41 and 8.22 to amend signature requirements for citizen initiatives and requirements for amending the charter by citizen initiative so that the percentage of signatures needed is based on the County Executive election as opposed to the gubernatorial election. On June 1, 2021 AB2021-278 was adopted as Ordinance 2021-032. On June 15, 2021 AB2021-279 failed in Council.

November 2, 2021: One proposed amendment was put on the ballot (Ord. 2021-032) and was approved by the voters. The sections amended were:

5.40	5.41
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**** This amendment must also be reflected in WCC 1.08.090 AND 1.08.170**

(NO AMENDMENTS)

August 2023: On August 8, 2023, a resolution (AB2023-518) was on the Council agenda for introduction declaring support of the Council to craft an ordinance to propose to the voters an amendment to the Charter to define the Sheriff as an appointed rather than an elected position. It proposed amendments to the following sections: 3.50, 3.51, 4.10, 4.30, and 6.100. Council voted to table the resolution indefinitely and it was not introduced. See Ballot Measure November 2, 2021 for resolution.

No changes made	No changes made
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PROPOSED AMENDMENT BY BALLOT MEASURE ON

NOVEMBER 5, 2024

November 2024: On November 21, 2023 an ordinance (AB2023-778 substitute; Ord 2023-083) was adopted, submitting to the qualified voters of Whatcom County a proposal to amend Whatcom County Charter section 4.30 to expand the standards for conflict of interest stating that elected county officials shall not only not hold another office or employment within County government but *also any other elected public office during their term of office.*

4.3	
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