

Common Threads

NORTHWEST

Wake Up Whatcom County

Here is this week's latest installment of arrogant and outrageous County Council behavior - aimed at all of our county's obviously "Deplorable citizenry", at least as seen in the eyes of the know-it-all elitists currently serving on that body.

Mark your calendar and be sure to join like minded citizens for an enlightening session at the Whatcom County Council meeting at **7:00 pm this coming Tuesday evening, December 5 at the County Courthouse**, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, 1st floor in the Council Chambers. Come early for a good seat. During "Open Session", let Council know what you think about their attempt to eliminate district voting for your County Council representatives before the system has completed the transition to five new districts. Or simply be there to show support and to let Council know that "business as usual" is a thing of the past.

New Agenda Just released - If you have enough patience, you will find this item "buried" way down in Whatcom County Council [Agenda Bill # 2017-352](#), an ordinance which would significantly change the way County Council conducts its business. The Agenda Bill itself is buried in [Council's just released Agenda](#) for their meetings to take place on this coming Tuesday, December 5, under the (daytime) Finance and Administrative Services Committee's agenda. See Item 4 under Committee Discussion and Recommendations to Council, innocuously labelled as "Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code 2.02, County Council (AB2017-352). If my attempt to incorporate the live links does not work for you, you can get to the information by logging on to the Whatcom County webpage, and going to the County Council page there.

WHATCOM COUNTY CODE 2.02.110 Ordinances- Introduction.

A. All proposed ordinances shall be filed with the clerk of the council in their entirety in writing and shall be introduced by a councilmember or by consent of the full council.

B. Proposed ordinances shall be introduced on the council's agenda by title, following which the council may refer the proposal to the appropriate standing or special committee, committee of the whole, or schedule the proposal for public hearing~. **PROPOSED NEW LANGUAGE THEY WANT TO ADD TO THE COUNTY CODE** : Ordinances may also be scheduled for council consideration without committee assignment or public hearing, if appropriate. (editor's emphasis here) Following committee report or public hearing closure, if applicable, an ordinance that has been properly introduced and scheduled on the agenda may be considered by the full council.

Special Committee of the Whole Meeting - Beginning at 2:15 pm Tuesday, December 5, also in the County Council Chambers, Council has scheduled a special Committee of the Whole meeting, where all seven Council members are required to be present. Two potentially significant items are scheduled for discussion at that meeting:

- The timeline for filling the vacant position created by Todd Donovan's recent election (see [AB2017-389](#))
- A "discussion", now public, with Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Civil Affairs, Dan Gibson about interpretations of the County Charter, voter intent, and who-knows-what- else Councilmember Browne will choose to throw at Mr. Gibson in Browne's pique over not getting his way last Tuesday because too many "Deplorables" representing the public showed up.

[Few details](#) concerning the planned discussion have been made available to the public. There are potentially serious legal ramifications for the County buried in what is likely to be a highly-interesting discussion. Council's daytime committee meetings are not televised.

These daytime committee deliberations will be further discussed at the regular 7:00 pm evening Council meeting.

Critical Areas Ordinance Update – Public Hearing – The long-awaited public hearing concerning the proposed CAO Update, [AB2016-276L](#), will take place during Tuesday's evening meeting. A requirement stemming from our state's Growth Management Act, the county's CAO is a shining example of where controls are needed to restrain a sometimes over-zealous local version of the "administrative state." To date, Council's draft ordinance appears to fall short in several areas that significantly impact rural property owners and farmers.

To cite just a few examples, allowing site-specific buffers, defining what constitutes a "qualified professional, establishing more realistic criteria for defining Category IV wetlands, placing some reasonable limits on the discretionary administrative authority granted to county staff are among ways by which the ordinance might be improved.

Other Topics of High Interest – There are too many to include, but here are a couple. There will be a public hearing on a proposed ordinance to establish a new special taxing district covering all properties located within the Lake Whatcom watershed. [AB2017-215C](#) proposes to establish the entirely new "Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility District". Critics are questioning the need for this new layer of taxing authority, the amount of public scrutiny the proposal has yet to receive, and how money raised will get used.

On his way out, Councilmember Carl Weimer has proposed a "parting gift" for the community - an ordinance to establish a new "Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee" ([AB2017-351](#)). In his list of "Whereas" findings to justify why he thinks his proposed new law is needed, Mr. Weimer repeatedly cites the 2015 United Nations Paris Agreement on Climate Change, an international treaty from which the United States has withdrawn its participation. Is this yet another example of our current County Council bending to the wishes of outspoken special interest groups, many located far away from Whatcom County? Does our County government really need such an advisory committee to fulfill its many local responsibilities? We ask, you decide.



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