



Emergency Medical Services EMS Oversight Board

Whatcom County Garden Level Conference Room
322 N Commercial St Bottom Floor Bellingham, WA
March 11, 2026
1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Agenda

EOB Members:

Executive Satpal Sidhu (Chair)
Kaylee Galloway, County Council
Jim Hallett, Finance/Budget Citizen Rep.
RobRoy Graham Fire Commissioners Assoc.
Scott Korthuis, City of Lynden Mayor
Citizen, with DEI commitment, VACANT

Citizen at large, VACANT
Kim Lund, City of Bellingham Mayor (Joint Chair)
Robert Rush Jr., MD, Medical Community Rep.
Dan Hammill, Bellingham City Council
Liz Baxter, Accountable Communities of Health

1. Welcome & Introductions Chair Sidhu
2. Confirmation, December 17, 2025, Minutes – 5 mins Chair Sidhu
3. Governance Update & Recommendations – 15 mins Hallett / Arthur
4. Finance Sub-Committee Update – 15 mins Korthuis
 - Reserve Recommendation
5. Levy Update – 15 mins Arthur
 - Proposed Levy Principles from the Hotwash
 - Committee and Chair Confirmation
6. WCEMS Staff Update – 5 mins Arthur
7. Recommendations and Updates from TAB – 5 mins Arthur
 - Medic Analysis at June EOB meeting
8. Round Table/ Good of the Order – 5 mins
 - Call for June agenda priorities
9. Public Comment

Public Comment: The EMS Oversight Board is a public meeting where members of the community may offer their input and feedback. For those who want to attend in person, you can watch the meeting at the Whatcom County Garden Level Conference Room 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham, WA. Community members may attend this meeting virtually with the Zoom Link Below:

Zoom webinar!

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dfoUBV1aQ_-Ay6h5KqIPPA

Meeting ID: 875 3622 5603

Passcode: 961465

SIP: 87536225603@zoomcrc.com

Passcode: 961465

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

The public can also access the link from the Whatcom County Government EOB Website below:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/699/EMS-Oversight-Board-EOB>

You will see the Zoom link under the Meetings Schedule Section.



Emergency Medical Services
EMS Oversight Board
Bellingham, WA 98225
Virtual
December 17, 2025
2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

EOB Members:

Executive Satpal Sidhu (Chair)
Ben Elenbaas County Council
Jim Hallett, Finance/Budget Citizen Rep.
RobRoy Graham Fire Commissioners Assoc.
Scott Korthuis, City of Lynden Mayor
Brittany Nick, Citizen DEI Rep

Rick Kowsky, Cascade Amb. Citizen at Large
Kim Lund, City of Bellingham Mayor (Joint Chair)
Robert Rush Jr., MD, Medical Community Rep.
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council
Liz Baxter, Accountable Communities of Health

Members not Present:

Brittany Nick, Citizen DEI Rep
Liz Baxter, Accountable Communities of Health
Kim Lund, City of Bellingham Mayor

Robert Rush Jr. MD, Medical Community Rep.
Executive Satpal Sidhu (Chair)
Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council

Guests:

Diana Clinch, WCEMS Data Analyst
Ralph Weiche, WCEMS MD
Kayla Schott-Bresler, Deputy Executive
Bill Hewitt, Fire Chief, COB Dist. #8

Forest Longman, COB Deputy Admin.
Steven Cohen, WCEMS Training Specialist
Kaylee Galloway, County Council
Deborah Arthur, WCEMS Manager

1. Welcome & Introductions

Schott-Bresler

Deputy Executive Kayla Schott-Bresler chaired the meeting in place of Executive Sidhu, with members confirming their comfort with her serving as acting chair and then introducing themselves, including new EMS Manager Debbie Arthur in her first EOB meeting as administrator.

2. Confirmation, October 10, 2025, Minutes

Schott-Bresler

Jim Hallett motioned to approve the meeting minutes, Korthuis seconded, and the meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Governance Update & Discussion

Schott-Bresler/ Arthur

Bylaws & Decision-Making Structure

- Schott-Bresler outlined a governance clean-up effort, explaining that the EOB currently operates under outdated county code, lacks its own bylaws, and relies on committee structures (such as the Finance Sub-Committee) that are not formally codified.
- She described plans for a joint Executive–Council process, led with Council members Galloway and Elenbaas, to:
 - update EOB bylaws
 - clarify decision-making structures
 - identify necessary changes to county code to improve transparency and effectiveness
- EOB members will be invited to participate as partners in this process.
- Arthur noted that, in the short term, the EOB will rely on Whatcom County’s general advisory board framework (Chapter 2.03) for guidance on terms, appointments, and removals until dedicated bylaws are developed.
- Several members, including citizen representative Rick Kowsky and Jim Hallett, volunteered to help with the governance work.
- Schott-Bresler indicated that governance will remain a standing topic throughout the coming year.

4. Finance Sub-Committee Update

Korthuis

Scott Korthuis presented an updated 2025 revenue and reserve outlook based on the latest information for:

- sales tax
- EMS transport fees
- GEMT revenue

Revenue Updates

- Sales tax is currently tracking below budget, likely ending about \$180,000 short.
- Investment income is higher than expected due to strong interest rates.
- EMS transport fee revenue has been corrected after earlier misbilling issues.
- GEMT revenue is now projected to exceed the \$1.9 million budget by about \$1 million, once expected payments from Fire District 7 and City of Bellingham are received.

Expenses & Reserves

- Most contract spending is tracking close to the year-to-date benchmark.
- However, the system remains several million dollars below its preferred reserve level, even after the County approved use of banked capacity.

Long-Range Outlook

- Using county finance projection charts, Korthuis highlighted that:
 - the “red line” (projected expenditures) continues rising faster than
 - the “green line” (projected revenues)
- This indicates that next year’s focus must be on either:
 - identifying additional revenue sources, or
 - slowing expense growth to keep the program financially sustainable.

5. Levy Planning

Arthur

Early EMS Levy Planning

Overview

- Arthur briefed the Board on early work related to the next EMS Levy.
- She emphasized that it is not too early to begin preparations, noting that initial conversations have already started in other committees.

Planning Approach

- Arthur outlined a two-part planning strategy:
- System and financial assessment, summarized in a memo to Council.
- A structured “hot wash” of the previous levy planning process, including:
 - outreach to prior levy committee members
 - gathering feedback on what worked well, what did not, and
 - identifying who should serve on the next levy planning committee.

Timeline Development

- Arthur is collaborating with the Executive’s Office to develop two detailed planning timelines:
 - one for a potential April ballot
 - one for a November ballot.
- Each timeline will outline all major milestones required for levy planning.

Next Steps

- Arthur expects the EOB to confirm the new levy planning committee at its next meeting.
- She plans to contact specific groups to nominate representatives for position-based appointments.

Committee Participation

- Arthur invited anyone interested in serving, including individuals who served previously, to respond to her outreach.
- The goal is to ensure the new committee and its subcommittees are energized and bring strong expertise.

1. EMS System & Administrative Office 2026 Workplan

Arthur

Arthur presented a 2026 work plan, emphasizing that it implements the current levy rather than setting a new policy.

Four System Goals

1. Deliver high-quality, patient-centered emergency care with reliable 24/7 access for county residents.
2. Ensure financial sustainability while honoring voter intent and maintaining reserves.
3. Strengthen transparency, data-informed decisions, and accountability.
4. Prepare for the next levy cycle through assessment of service levels, costs, and future needs.

2026 Operational Priorities

- Conduct a comprehensive EMS system and financial assessment, with a formal report to Council.
- Maintain disciplined financial management, including:
 - annual review of the EMS standard cost model
 - reserve policy monitoring
 - updated inflation assumptions.
- Expand data, performance metrics, and public dashboards to support clinical and financial decisions.
- Advance strategic system planning, including:
 - evaluating a sixth medic unit

- reviewing prevention and outreach programs
- identifying efficiency opportunities.

System Capacity & Roles

- Arthur clarified roles within the EMS administrative office and highlighted system capacity, including hundreds of EMTs, dozens of paramedics, and many responders, emphasizing the collaboration required among chiefs, commissioners, councils, and board members.

Board Response

- Members responded positively; Hallett and Dr. Robert Rush praised the plan's clarity and focus on patient outcomes and system value.

Public Information

- Arthur noted the EMS website now includes expanded performance data, with 2024 data posted and 2025 data forthcoming.
- She welcomed suggestions for sharing the work plan and metrics with groups such as the Community Health Board to build awareness and support.

6. Round Table/ Good of the Order

EOB Meeting Schedule

- Members discussed adjusting the standing EOB meeting time beginning in 2026.
- The goal is to allow Mayor Korthuis to attend consistently while also accommodating other recurring commitments, such as Council of Governments meetings.

Future Meeting Format

Schott-Bresler reiterated interest in returning to in-person EOB meetings in 2026.

The shift is intended to:

- strengthen board cohesion
- support richer discussion
- help the board prepare as levy planning intensifies

EMS Foundation Event

- Hallett highlighted the upcoming March 7 EMS Foundation event.
- The foundation plans to honor dispatchers, first responders, and community members who have contributed to life-saving efforts.
- Members were invited to submit nominations of individuals who should be recognized.

7. Public Comment

No remarks from attendees, but before adjournment, Rob Roy Graham asked that the board formally recognize Council member Kaylee Galloway's extensive personal efforts in support of EMS during the recent levy decisions, which Schott-Bresler agreed to convey.

Governance Sub-Committee Report to the EOB, March 11, 2026

Submitted by James Hallett and Deborah Arthur

1. Membership

a) Status

- Please welcome Dan Hammill from the Bellingham City Council (replacing Lilliquist) and Kaylee Galloway from the Whatcom County Council. These are both Ex-Officio positions.
- One citizen position became *vacant* on 2/1/26 (Kowsky)
- One DEI position became *vacant* on 2/1/26 (Nick)
- One DEI position has been reapplied for and approved by the county council on 2/10/26 (Baxter)

b) Terms

All other appointments are in order with updated appointment letters per Chapter 2.03. Term dates for all EOB members will be added to the EOB website to improve visibility

c) Composition

The current board composition generally supports the EOB's purpose and reflects key stakeholder groups. Does it provide sufficient 360-degree perspectives to inform effective decision-making, or should adjustments be considered to ensure continued alignment with the board's mission as conditions and priorities evolve?

2. Absenteeism

The county council has a written procedure for absenteeism that is not part of the code (attached), and they do not have immediate plans to add to Chapter 2.03. As an immediate action, we suggest that the chair send a memo encouraging attendance and outlining the terms and expectations of their appointments. If this approach is too soft, then we can draft bylaws and codify them in the WCC Code.

3. Delegates

Under section 2.03, proxies are generally not allowed to vote or count toward a quorum. There have been limited exceptions in the past when the governing code explicitly allows a member to send a designee (e.g., "the Chief of Police or their designee"), but that language does not apply to the EOB or TAB. While proxies are not permitted, non-County entities that appoint members (such as the Small Cities partnership) may still ensure voting participation by properly appointing someone to attend on their behalf.

Addressing Absent Advisory Group Members

Issue

An advisory group member has become continuously absent, with no notice or explanation, from their duties as a **Council-appointed** advisory group member.

Goal

The preferred goal is to re-engage the absent advisory group member if at all possible. The alternative goal is for the advisory group member to voluntarily resign the position if their circumstances prevent them from participating regularly.

Whatcom County Code

Chapter 2.03, Boards and Commissions

Section 2.03.025 Removal

In circumstances where the council has the authority to remove from office a member of an advisory group prior to the expiration of the advisory group member's term of office, the council shall make such removal only upon the proper grounds specified in law. In the absence of such guidance in law, the council shall not remove a member from office without having given the member an opportunity to be heard by the council, if so requested.

Procedure

The Advisory Group Facilitator and/or Chair ("Facilitator/Chair") and the Council Office Legislative Coordinator will determine if: 1. Council has the authority to remove the absent member from office, and 2. If there are proper grounds for removal specified in law. Facilitator/Chair and Legislative Coordinator may consult with legal counsel if necessary. If the Council has the authority and there are no other grounds for removal specified in law, then the Facilitator/Chair and the County Council Office will comply with Whatcom County Code 2.03, Removal, and the general procedure below.

The Facilitator/Chair will reach out to the absent member by phone, email, and mail to request that the absent member either re-engage or, if necessary, resign. They will make several attempts to make contact using all options over a reasonable and generous period of time, not less than one month.

If contact is made and the absent member expresses challenges with participating, then the Facilitator/Chair should attempt to mitigate any barriers to the absent member's participation on the advisory group. Facilitator/Chair, with approval from the Council Chair, will have discretion to allow an extended leave of absence for a reasonable length of time, if needed for the absent member to resolve their situation and return to active, regular participation.

The Facilitator/Chair will document all attempts to re-engage the absent member. If the absent member has not responded to any of the attempts at contact, then the Facilitator/Chair will notify the County Council Chair and the Council's Legislative Coordinator.

The Council Chair will work with the Legislative Coordinator to make additional attempts to contact the absent member by phone, email, and mail to request that the absent member either re-engage or, if necessary, resign. All written attempts at contact will include: 1. a deadline by which the absent member should respond; 2. Notice that if no response is

Addressing Absent Advisory Group Members

received by the deadline, then the status of the applicant's position will be scheduled before the County Council for reconsideration; and 3. WCC 2.03, Removal.

If the absent member does not respond by the deadline, the Legislative Coordinator will schedule the matter at a regularly-scheduled evening Council meeting and send a written notice to the absent member by email and mail that the absent member may respond before the meeting or attend the meeting and respond, per WCC 2.03.025, Removal.

If the absent member has not responded to any attempts at contact by the Facilitator/Chair or the Council Chair, Council may vote to remove the appointed member from their appointed position.



MEMORANDUM

To: Whatcom County EMS Oversight Board

From: Deborah Arthur, WCEMS Manager

Date: March 11, 2026

Subject: Approval of EMS Levy Committee for the 2029–2034 EMS Levy

Pursuant to [Whatcom County Code 5.04.080\(C\)\(2\)\(c\)](#), I am submitting the proposed membership of the EMS Levy Committee for the 2029–2034 Emergency Medical Services Levy for the Board’s review and approval.

The EMS Levy Committee is responsible for evaluating system needs, reviewing program funding priorities, and developing recommendations for the EMS levy proposal covering the 2029–2034 period. The proposed committee membership is intended to provide representation from key stakeholders within the Whatcom County EMS system and from community perspectives.

The proposed committee members are as follows:

	17 Levy Planning Committee Members Participating Agencies	Proposed 2029-2034 Committee Members
1	Whatcom County	Deborah Arthur
2	COB	Forrest Longman
3	COB County Council	Dan Hammill
4	Whatcom County Council	Ben Elenbaas
5	Small Cities Representative	Scott Korthuis
6	BFD	Dave Pethick
7	WCFD7	Ben Rusell
8	Chief Lynden FD	Mike Noonan
9	Whatcom County Fire Chiefs Association	Hank Maleng
10	Whatcom County Fire Commissioners	Rob Roy Graham
11	IAFF Local 106 Representative	Scott Farrell
12	Whatcom 7 firefighter representative	Jeff Sluys
13	Citizen Representative	<i>pending</i>
14	Citizen Finance Representative	James Hallett
15	WC EMS / Trauma Council	Jerry Debruin*
16	EMS or fire department employee or citizens with demonstrated commitment to DEI - position 1	Rachel Carlson
17	EMS or fire department employee or citizens with demonstrated commitment to DEI - position 2	<i>pending</i>
	Chair- Whatcom County Executive and Mayor of Bellingham Appoint a chair from the levy planning committee members	James Hallett

Two additional committee positions are pending confirmation, and their participation will be finalized upon their consent to serve.

Staff respectfully requests that the EMS Oversight Board approve the formation and proposed membership of the EMS Levy Committee for the 2029–2034 levy period, with the understanding that the final two appointments will be confirmed once consent has been obtained.

Please let me know if any additional information is needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Arthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Deborah Arthur
WCEMS Manager



Deborah Arthur

Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services Manager

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Bellingham, WA 98225

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360-297-1155

February 12, 2026

Satpal Sidhu

Whatcom County Executive

Kim Lund

Mayor, City of Bellingham

Re: Recommendation for Appointment of Chair – EMS Levy Planning Committee (2029–2034)

Executive Sidhu and Mayor Lund:

Pursuant to [Whatcom County Code 5.04.080\(C\)\(2\)\(c\)](#), which provides that the Whatcom County Executive and Mayor of Bellingham shall appoint a chair from among the levy planning committee members, I respectfully submit this recommendation for your consideration.

The EMS Levy Planning Committee for the 2029–2034 cycle is scheduled to be confirmed at the EOB Advisory Board meeting on March 11, 2026. Upon confirmation of the committee, I respectfully recommend that you appoint **James D. Hallett as Chair**.

Mr. Hallett brings extensive executive leadership, financial expertise, and public governance experience. He is the Founding Principal of Hallett Advisors (1987–2022) and holds multiple professional accreditations in financial planning and fiduciary analysis. His record of public service includes elected positions as a Port Angeles City Council member (two terms), Mayor of Port Angeles, and Port Commissioner. Of particular relevance, he is a Founding Member and Board Chair of the Emergency Medical Services Foundation of Whatcom County.

Mr. Hallett’s demonstrated leadership in financial stewardship, governance, and EMS-related community service would provide steady and capable guidance for the 2029–2034 levy planning process.

A copy of Mr. Hallett’s résumé is attached for your review.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Deborah Arthur

WCEMS Manager



JAMES D HALLETT

PERSONAL

- Lifelong Washington resident
- Married to Joanne; two adult sons (Ross, Bend OR; Alex, Bellingham, WA) owned by two American Eskimo dogs (Mika and Max).
- After living in Port Angeles, WA for 40 years; moved to Bellingham in 2018

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA
- Master of Science, Financial Planning (MSFP), College for Financial Planning, Denver, CO

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

- Account Executive and Territory Manager, Motorola Communications & Electronics, 1978-87
- Founding Principal, Hallett Advisors, (National Financial Planning & Wealth Management Firm), 1987 - 2022
- Professional Accreditations: Certified Financial Planner (CFP), Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC), Accredited Investment Fiduciary Analyst (AIFA), Certified Divorce Financial Analyst (CDFA)

COMMUNITY and PUBLIC SERVICE

- Founding Member; Board Chair, Emergency Medical Services Foundation of Whatcom County
- Elected Office: Port Angeles City Council, two terms; Mayor, City of Port Angeles; Port Commissioner, Port of Port Angeles
- Board member and leadership roles in multiple civic and non-profit organizations
- Instrumental in the creation, development and operation of multiple Endowments and Foundations supporting Health Care, Human Services, Higher Education, The Arts, Youth Services, and Animal Welfare

Suggested Planning Principles for the 2029-2034 Levy Committee

Based on the Hot Wash of 2016 and 2022 Levy Cycles

- 1. Clarity First:** Make threshold decisions early and document them clearly.
- 2. Transparency Always:** Show assumptions, tradeoffs, and consequences publicly.
- 3. System Sustainability Over Optimization:** Prioritize system reliability and quality for the next 6 years.
- 4. Equity Across the County:** Balance urban and rural needs intentionally.
- 5. Data-Informed, Not Data-Bound:** Use data to guide decisions (illuminate trends, clarify tradeoffs, strengthen credibility), not delay them (shouldn't be a reason to postpone hard choices or be treated as needing to be perfect before action or override professional judgement, experience, or community values)
- 6. Early and Continuous Engagement:** Bring stakeholders and the public along early.
- 7. Disciplined Process:** Respect timelines, roles, and accountability.
- 8. Tell the Story Consistently:** Use clear, repeated messaging across all forums.