



**WHATCOM COUNTY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
INVESTMENT BOARD**

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Satpal Singh Sidhu

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BELLINGHAM, WA 98225

WHATCOM COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT (EDI) BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 5, 2025, 12:00 – 3:13 p.m.

Garden Level Conference Room, 322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham (Hybrid Meeting)

MEMBERS PRESENT: (All members were in attendance)

Satpal Singh Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive (Chair)
Andrew Calkins, Bellingham/Whatcom Housing Authority
Atul Deshmane, Public Utility District #1
Dan Dunne, Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee
Drew Smith, People's Bank
Guy Occhiogrosso, Bellingham Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
Kayla Schott-Bresler, Whatcom County Deputy Executive
Ken Bell, Port of Bellingham Commissioner (represented by Mike Hogan)
Kevin Hester, Small Cities Caucus Representative (Nooksack)
Kim Lund, Mayor of Bellingham (represented by Tara Sundin)
Marcus Warolin, Whatcom Community Foundation
Mark Stremmer, Whatcom County Council
Scott Korthius, Small Cities Caucus Representative (Lynden)
Tyler Schroeder, Associate Development Organization Representative

STAFF PRESENT:

- Jake Logan, Clerk of the Board, Executive's Office
- Jill Boudreau, Senior Policy & Project Manager, Executive's Office
- Tawni Helms, Office Administrator, Executive's Office

OTHERS PRESENT:

- Chris Settler, President, Maple Falls Water Co-op
- Alan Sherman, Board Member, Maple Falls Water Co-op
- Corey Saxon, Water System Operator and Manager, Maple Falls Water Co-op
- Dave Foreman, Chief Financial Officer, Opportunity Council (online)
- Mike Hogan, Port of Bellingham
- Racquel Muncy, Lynden Tribune (online)
- Rose Lathrop, Executive Director, Kulshan Community Land Trust
- Tim Holman, Engineering Manager, City of Bellingham
- Tara Sundin, City of Bellingham
- Eric Chambers, Whatcom County Health Department

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Sidhu called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone, including attendees participating online.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dave Foreman (representing the Opportunity Council) acknowledged the EDI Board's work and highlighted the Opportunity Council's application for the Bellis Fair Senior Housing Project, which would serve 64 low-income seniors. He emphasized the project's importance for employment opportunities for seniors and noted that the project is "almost fully funded," with the EDI application being a crucial component. The Opportunity Council is finalizing an equity investor and requested approximately \$1.3 million from Whatcom County as a loan, which he characterized as a good investment for the community.

3. MINUTES REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The minutes from the May 8, 2025, meeting were reviewed. No comments or changes were offered.

MOTION: A motion was made by Scott Korthius and Seconded by Ken Bell to approve the minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Jill **Boudreau** presented the financial update, showing: Total amount available for allocation: \$7,238,447. Council's target allocations: 40% for infrastructure projects (\$4,137,383) and 30% for housing projects (\$3,103,038) The remaining 30% is reserved for County projects. Executive Sidhu characterized this as a "transition year" from 2025 to 2026, with some "quirks from the past" needing cleanup, but noted the process is becoming more formalized. Some members raised concerns about long-term strategic planning for infrastructure, emphasizing the need to create jobs. Kayla Schott-Bresler clarified that the 40%/30% split represents suggestions from the Council, which is the ultimate funding and policy body for EDI funds. She advised that deviating significantly from Council's strong signals on affordable housing would require clear rationale from the board.

5. REVIEW OF SCORING PROCESS

Jill Boudreau explained the scoring process (which took place in advance of the meeting), combined staff objective scores (25% weighting) and Board subjective scores (75% weighting). Scores from Board members with potential conflicts of interest were eliminated. Board conversation ensued.

6. 2026 APPLICATION REVIEW/DISCUSSION & FUNDING

Available for allocation: \$7,244,421

Total housing requests: \$7.4 million Total infrastructure requests: \$8.05 million

HOUSING PROJECTS

Kulshan Community Land Trust (KCLT) – Telegraph Townhomes & Birchwood La Freniere Court

Rose Lathrop representing KCLT was in attendance and was invited to present on both projects:

Telegraph Townhomes (Phase 1D): Final phase of a 24-home development, delivering 8 energy-efficient, 3-bedroom affordable homeownership units for households at 80% AMI and below. This is a collaboration with Habitat for Humanity. EDI funding is to keep purchase cost low due to rising construction costs. Homes remain permanently affordable through the Community Land Trust model (buyers gain 1.5% equity per year).

Birchwood La Freniere Court: An 18-unit, permanently affordable new construction project for first-time homebuyers under 80% AMI, currently under construction. EDI funds would go directly towards construction costs to lower initial prices, enabling KCLT to serve a more income-diverse population.

MOTION: Dan Dunne moved to approve the Telegraph Townhomes project for a \$400,000 grant and the Birchwood La Freniere Court project for a \$350,000 grant. The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Port of Bellingham – Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park

Mike Hogan presented the project to upgrade outdated sewer, stormwater, and power infrastructure in the 15-acre Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park, built in the 1960s-70s. The project addresses climate resilience (flooding) and would enable development of Lot 8. The Port requested a \$1 million grant and a \$2 million loan. The board discussed the business plan and the financial feasibility, and why the port needed a grant at all, instead of a 100% loan.

MOTION: A motion was made to approve the project as requested (\$1 million grant, \$2 million loan). The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention (Ken Bell).

Maple Falls Water Co-op – Water Storage Tank Replacement

Chris Settler presented the project to replace one of two decommissioned water storage tanks to improve fire flow and service in Maple Falls. The Co-op represents an economically disadvantaged community (ranking 9 out of 10 on the Department of Health socioeconomic disparity scale). The project would allow them to increase shares from 80 to approximately 150 and support economic development. Scott Korthius spoke in support the project, highlighting the benefit and importance of fire flow in East Whatcom. Guy Occhiogrosso mentioned that this is the type of project that the Rural Sales Tax was originally created to support.

MOTION: It was moved to approve the Maple Falls Water Co-op application for \$555,300. Mayor Lund seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

City of Bellingham – Pine/Wharf Waterfront Connection

Tim Holman representing the city of Bellingham presented the project's connection to the city's quiet zone initiative and new waterfront district. He addressed concerns about truck access, stating the roundabout is designed for trucks and improvements will make it safer for industrial traffic while accommodating pedestrians and bikes.

No formal motion was made for this project.

MOTION: Dan Dunne moved to take the remaining \$600,000 from the infrastructure allocation and earmark it for the same bucket next year. Tyler Schroeder seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

HOUSING PROJECTS (CONTINUED)

Catholic Community Services – Lynden Station Workforce Housing

MOTION: Dan Dunne initially moved to approve the Lynden Station Workforce Housing for its full loan amount (\$1,115,000). In discussion the board noted the project is several years out (2028-29) and suggested the county's Affordable Housing Sales Tax Revenue (1590 funds) might be a more appropriate source for this \$1.1 million request, as the county's 1590 funds are designated for projects outside Bellingham. This project is supported by the Whatcom Transportation Authority – it is sited on WTA surplus land. Andrew Calkins noted the project timeline projects Finance Close and Construction Start in Summer 2027, with completion in Spring 2029, which is later than the other projects being considered by Board. The project is seeking \$5 million total from the county, from the EDI program and from Whatcom County HB1590 funds. After discussion about the extended timeline and alternative funding sources, **the motion was withdrawn.**

Opportunity Council – Bellis Fair Senior Housing

Dave Foreman presented Phase 2 of the Bellis Fair development, consisting of 64 units for households at 30-60% AMI. This is a loan request, intended to be repaid as cash flow allows. The project has City of Bellingham support and is finalizing 9% LIHTC equity investment. Construction is expected to begin in early 2026.

Bellingham Housing Authority – Unity Street Redevelopment

Andrew Calkins presented the redevelopment of a site downtown office spaces into affordable housing with mostly 1- and 2-bedroom units. Approximately 70% of units are for people earning 50-60% AMI. BHA is donating the land and has received City of Bellingham funding.

MOTION: It was moved by Dan Dunne to recommend funding both the Unity Street Redevelopment (\$1,000,000 loan) and Bellis Fair Senior Housing (\$1,386,485 loan).

Vote: The motion received only 6 affirmative votes and therefore **failed**. **In favor (6)** were Schott-Bresler, Smith, Dunne, Warolin, Deshmane, and Sidhu. **Abstained (1)** was Andrew Calkins. **Against (7)** were Lund, Occhiogrosso, Hester, Korthius, Stremmler, Bell, and Schroeder.

The Board agreed to defer final decisions on remaining housing projects to allow for additional information gathering and strategic discussion. This outcome led to further discussion about scheduling another meeting to focus purely on housing projects, opportunity cost, other funding streams, and make a more specific recommendation to the County Council for their process.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sidhu adjourned the meeting at 3:13 p.m.

Next Meeting: To be determined

The recorded Board recommendations for the 2026 EDI allocation stand as follows:

Maple Falls Water Co-op	Water tank infrastructure	Grant	\$ 555,300
Port of Bellingham	Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park	\$1M Grant \$2M Loan	\$ 3,000,000
Kulshan Community Land Trust	LaFreniere Court Townhomes	Grant	\$ 350,000
Kulshan Community Land Trust	Telegraph Townhomes	Grant	\$ 400,000
	Recommendation to reserve in infrastructure allocation for 2027 funding		\$ 600,000
	Total 2026 recommendation		\$ 4,905,300

Remaining funding available (but not required) to recommend for allocation: \$2,335,121

Respectfully submitted,

Jake Logan
Clerk of the EDI Board
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