

2021 Steps of Process & Timeline

This applies to initiatives and/or referenda where submissions of petition signatures are required.

Steps of Process:

Preliminary meeting with Auditor to discuss process and requirements, including:

- Recommend consultation with private legal counsel
- Consult Charter Article 5 and WCC 1.08 re Initiatives and Referenda
- Refer to Assessor for (would they have any implications or taxing questions; legal description if creating a district)
- Timeline
- Number of signatures needed to sign petitions and passage requirements
- Proponent submits proposed petition format; discuss any changes needed
- Within five (5) days, meets with Auditor who will transmit proposal to Prosecutor
- Within ten (10) days, Prosecutor reviews, writes ballot title, recommends any other changes, including valid subject matter and other limitations; discussion with proponent if needed. See page 4 of Handbook
- Proponent submits final version
- Auditor reviews and accepts final version
- Collection of signatures can begin (up to 120 days in most instances*)
- If Proponent is dissatisfied with the ballot title, 10 days to appeal to the Superior Court
- Proponent presents signed petitions to Auditor for signature verification
- Up to 30 days is allowed for signature verification (usually two weeks max)
- If sufficient, Auditor submits at the next general election that is not less than 120 days after the signed [petitions are delivered to the Auditor for certification
- Council may adopt the proposal or Council may adopt a substitute proposal and both will be on the same ballot

***Note:** If the goal is to meet the deadline for this year's general election, it may mean using less than 120 days for signature gathering. If the goal is to use all 120 days for signature gathering, it may mean the item will have to wait until next year's general election.

2021 Timeline:

Submit Petition or Initiative to Auditor	1/25/2021
Approval through Auditor and Prosecutor (up to 15 days)	2/11/2021
Gather signatures	2/11/2021 - 6/10/2021
Auditor Verifies Signatures on Petitions	6/11/2021 – 7/1/2021
Auditor sends certificate of sufficiency of petition to County Council	7/2/2021
(If Council needs to approve resolution and accept petition;	7/6/2021 – 7/27/2021)
Council submits to Auditor adopted ordinance	7/28/2021
Ballot Development	8/18/2021
Ballots to Printer	9/3/2021
Election Day	11/2/2021

Article 5, Whatcom County Charter
Whatcom County Code Chapter 1.08