

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL SEEKS MEMBERS TO SERVE ON PRO AND CON STATEMENT WRITING COMMITTEES

BELLINGHAM, Washington, July 27, 2021 - The Whatcom County Council seeks members to serve on committees to prepare statements for the Whatcom County Voters' Guide. One committee will prepare a statement in favor of, and the other committee will prepare a statement in opposition of, the following proposals:

PROPOSAL 1 - AMENDMENTS TO THE WHATCOM COUNTY CHARTER

On June 1, 2021, the Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance 2021-032, submitting to the qualified voters of Whatcom County a proposal to amend Whatcom County Charter Sections 5.40 and 5.41 to align signature requirements for citizen initiatives with Washington State norms. This ordinance submits to the qualified voters of Whatcom County (at the November 2021 General Election) a charter amendment to allow that persons proposing an initiative must " collect the signatures of the registered voters in the county equal in number to not less than eight (8) percent of the vote cast in the county in the last regular county executive election," and the requirement for a mini -initiative be " the signatures of qualified voters equal in number to not less than three (3) percent of the number of votes cast in the county in the last county executive election." The changes would amend Section 5. 40 and Section 5. 41 of the County Charter.

If the proposal is approved by the voters, the Whatcom County Charter will read as follows:

Section 5.40 Initiative – Procedures.

Any legal voter or organization of legal voters of Whatcom County may file an initiative proposal with the County Auditor, who within five (5) days, excluding Saturday, Sunday and holidays, shall confer with the petitioner to review the proposal as to form and style. The Auditor shall give the proposed initiative a number, which shall thereafter be the identifying number for the measure. The Auditor shall then transmit a copy of the proposal to the Prosecuting Attorney, who within ten (10) days after receipt thereof, in consultation with the petitioner shall formulate the ballot title which shall consist of: (a) a statement of the subject of the measure; (b) a concise description of the measure; and (c) a question: "Shall this be enacted into law?" The statement of the subject of the measure must be proposed as a positive statement, be sufficiently broad to reflect the subject, and be sufficiently precise to give notice of the measure's subject matter, and not exceed ten words. The concise description must contain no more than thirty words, be a true and impartial description of the measure's essential contents, clearly identify the proposition to be voted on, and not, to the extent reasonably possible, create prejudice either for or against the measure. Such concise statement will be the ballot title. The petitioner then has one hundred and twenty (120) days to collect the signatures of the registered voters in the county equal in number to not less than eight (8) percent of the vote cast in the county in the last regular county executive gubernatorial election. The one hundred and twenty (120) day period shall begin upon receipt of official notification to petitioner(s) by the Prosecuting Attorney's Office either by certified mail or messenger. If the last day for collecting signatures falls on a weekend or legal holiday, then the one hundred and twenty (120) day period shall extend to the end of the next business day.

Section 5.41 Mini-Initiative.

Any ordinance or amendment to an existing ordinance may be proposed to the County Council by registering with the Auditor initiative petitions bearing the signatures of qualified voters equal in number to not less than three (3) percent of the number of votes cast in the county in the last county executive gubernatorial election. Upon verifying the sufficiency of the signatures, the Auditor shall transmit the initiative petition to the Council which shall hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance and enact or reject the ordinance within sixty (60) days.

The proposition shall be in substantially the following form:

BASING THE PERCENTAGE OF NECESSARY SIGNATURES FOR AN INITIATIVE/MINI-INITIATIVE ON THE LAST COUNTY EXECUTIVE ELECTION

The Whatcom County Council has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter concerning the requirements for initiatives/mini-initiatives. This measure would amend Section 5.40 Initiative--Procedures to change the requirement for petitions to include the signatures of voters equal to at least eight (8) percent of the vote cast in the county in the "last regular gubernatorial election" to "last regular county executive election" and would amend Section 5.41 Mini-Initiative to change the requirement that a petition bear the signatures of voters equal to at least three (3) percent of the number of votes cast in the county "in the last gubernatorial election" to "in the last county executive election." Should this proposal be approved?

YES _____

NO _____

PROPOSAL 2 - ESTABLISHMENT OF A BIRCH BAY LIBRARY CAPITAL FACILITY AREA

On July 27, 2021, the Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance 2021-049, requesting the Whatcom County Auditor include on the ballot at the November General Election the question of establishing a Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area to finance a new library facility in Birch Bay. This ordinance submits to the qualified voters within the boundaries of the proposed district, as requested by the Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees, a proposal to establish a Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area to finance a new library facility in Birch Bay.

The proposition shall be in substantially the following form:

ESTABLISHING THE BIRCH BAY LIBRARY CAPITAL FACILITY AREA

The Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance No. 2021-049 concerning a proposition to establish the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area to finance a new library facility in Birch Bay. If approved, this proposition would establish the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area with boundaries as described in County Council Ordinance No. 049, authorize it to acquire, construct, furnish and equip a new library in Birch Bay, incur indebtedness to finance such improvements through the issuance of up to \$4,500,000 in general obligation bonds maturing within 20 years, and levy annual excess property taxes to repay such bonds. Should this proposition be Approved?

YES _____

NO _____

Per RCW 29A.32.280, the Council will formally appoint a committee to prepare arguments advocating voters' approval of the measures and shall formally appoint a committee to prepare arguments advocating voters' rejection of the measures. The Council will appoint persons known to favor the measure to serve on the committee advocating approval and shall, whenever possible, appoint persons known to oppose the measure to serve on the committee advocating rejection. Each committee shall have not more than three members, however, a committee may seek the advice of any person or persons. If the Council fails to make such appointments by the prescribed deadline, the county auditor shall whenever possible make the appointments.

If you are interested in serving on the "pro" or "con" committee for either of the above proposals, please submit your name to the Whatcom County Council Office by 10 a.m. Monday, August 2, 2021, to be considered for appointment. The Council will appoint members at an afternoon special meeting (time to be determined) on Monday, August 2, 2021.

Names can be submitted by emailing the Council Office at council@co.whatcom.wa.us or calling 360.778.5010.