

Anacortes City Council Minutes - March 10, 2025

Call to Order

Mayor Pro Tempore Carolyn Moulton called to order the Anacortes City Council meeting of March 10, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers TJ Fantini, Ryan Walters, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, and Bruce McDougall were present. Councilmember Amanda Hubik participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

The assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements and Committee Reports

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton announced the Guemes Ferry haulout schedule from March 15th to April 29th, with passenger-only service available according to a non-peak schedule and Skagit Transit providing call-in transit on the Guemes Island side and detailed the parking areas available during the haulout. She then announced the 40th Legislative District community town hall at the Mount Vernon Public Library commons on Saturday, March 15th, from 11am-12pm and that the *Cascadia Daily News* is hosting a meet-and-greet on Tuesday, March 18th, from 1-3pm at the Anacortes Public Library community meeting room. Finally, she announced that there would be a Comprehensive Plan Update Open House on Thursday, March 20th at 6pm in City Hall. Mayor Pro Tem Moulton then addressed an allegation made at the previous City Council meeting that municipal court recordings were tampered with or modified. She reported that an investigation found that the allegations were unsubstantiated, pointing out that court staff do not have the access rights to edit court recordings and that the system experienced an error on October 24, 2024, delaying the upload of the recording until October 28, 2024.

Housing Affordability and Community Services Committee

Mr. Walters reported from the Housing Affordability and Community Services Committee meeting held March 5th. The topics discussed included the Community Development Block Grant 2025 Action Plan and additional support for the Anacortes Family Center for three projects funded by the affordable housing sales tax due to increased costs as a result of inflation.

Planning Committee

Ms. Cleland-McGrath reported from the Planning Committee meeting held earlier in the evening. The topics discussed included the Comprehensive Plan Update Open House on March 20th at 6pm in City Hall to discuss components of the climate element, Comprehensive Plan update goals and policies that will be open for public comment and going before the Planning Commission in April, and a discussion about framing the housing shortage in Anacortes and Skagit County to focus on housing needs and how to provide more options to enable citizens to work and live in Anacortes.

Public Safety Committee

Mr. Fantini reported from the Public Safety Committee meeting held March 4th. Police topics discussed included a training and staffing update, the new canine, Zeke, who is projected to be out in the field in May, and possible cooperative use of a shooting range with the Oak Harbor Police Department. Fire topics included a recruiting update, a contract for updated portable radios to allow for cross-agency communications on all department radios, and revising service level standards to be more attainable for the Comprehensive Plan update.

Port / City Liaison Committee

Mr. Walters reported from the Port / City Liaison Committee meeting held March 4th. The topics discussed included repair of the boardwalk at Ship Harbor, the Depot Plaza expansion project, updates to the city permit process, cooperation on updating the protocol for adding individuals to the Seafarers memorial, heavy haul and parade permitting, and the Guemes Ferry haulout. The committee also discussed the proposed event center

interlocal agreements, with a final small group editing session to take place on March 17th to resolve any outstanding issues, after which the draft agreements would come before each organization's legislative body for approval.

Public Comment

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton invited the public to comment on any item not on the agenda.

Allen Bush of Guemes Island commented on the coming ferry haulout, and concerns associated with the dock improvements for ferry electrification, asking for open communication between the Council and the Guemes Island Ferry and Planning committees.

Mr. Walters suggested that now would be a good time to have the city's Public Works department engage with area residents on parking in light of a different approach by Skagit County to the haulout event, and that the Council could not discuss the electric ferry dock improvements due to the issue coming before the Council in a quasi-judicial setting.

Gabe Murphy of Guemes Island commented on a desire for open communication and collaboration between the City Council and Guemes Island residents regarding ferry-related issues to minimize the impact on the Anacortes downtown area and allow Guemes residents to freely access the community.

Consent Agenda

Mr. McDougall moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda items. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

a. Minutes of March 3, 2025

b. Approval of claims in the amount of \$835,226.19

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:

EFT numbers: 111881 through 111929, total \$514,771.41

Check numbers: 111930 through 111948, total \$305,256.77

Wire transfer numbers: 364892 through 365091, total \$15,198.01

c. Special Event: Procession of the Species

d. Special Event: Luminary Light Parade

e. Contract Award: A Ave/Pointe Water Booster Stations Generator Replacement Project – Installation #24-257-ERR-002

f. Contract Award: Portable Generator for Water Pump Stations #25-084-ERR-001

Public Hearings

Public Hearing: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2025 Action Plan

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton announced that this would be the first public hearing on the CDBG 2025 Action Plan, with a second public hearing occurring on April 21st. Planning, Community, and Economic Development Coordinator Stephanie Snyder and Planning, Community, and Economic Development Director John Coleman introduced the CDBG 2025 Action Plan, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion topics included:

- Administrative fees go to the city for general fund replacement of funds to manage the grant.
- Limited resources for the organizations that are trying to help those in need.
- Community Action was not awarded due to being awarded a contract for public services from general fund moneys.
 - Disqualification under Chapter 7 of the Housing and Urban Development regulations.

- Anacortes Family Center is funded under the housing for all mechanism, which is different from public services funds.
- Community paramedic and outreach program funding source?
- Timing issues should the project not be complete by June 30th, then the funds can be moved to another project or funds can be reclaimed by the federal government.
- Increased or more effective public outreach.
- Amendment requirements for grant applications.
- Urgency of funding request in light of global economic conditions.
- Recognize the achievement of spending previous years funding.

At approximately 6:42 pm, Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton opened the advertised public hearing on the CDBG 2025 Action Plan, and invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. No one present wished to address the Council. At 6:43 pm, Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton closed the advertised public hearing on the CDBG 2025 Action Plan.

Other Business

Property Tax Assessments

Finance Director Steve Hoglund and Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton introduced Skagit County Assessor Danny Hagen, who delivered a presentation on property tax assessments, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. No one present wished to address the Council.

Discussion topics included:

- Senior property tax exemption program.
 - Deductions from income for medical expenses to adjust income level for qualification.
 - The Assessor's office has limited leeway to make adjustments based on the law.
 - Working with the state legislature to bring more seniors under the program.
 - Program flier with tax bills to make individuals aware of the program.
 - Outreach to local banks to increase program awareness and participation.
 - Enrollment in the program equals automatic enrollment in the city's utility discount program.
- One property tax assessment per year.
- Erosion of property tax purchasing power due to inflation for government programs.

Solarize Skagit

Mary Wohleb of the Skagit County Clean Energy Alliance delivered a presentation on the 2025 Solarize Skagit campaign initiative, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting.

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item.

Sean McCool of Anacortes asked about financing the project versus paying up front.

Discussion topics included:

- Net metering rate commences when the hookup to the electrical grid is established.
- Renewal rate changes and lobbying for program fairness.

Interlocal Agreement #25-064-IDS-001 with City of Mount Vernon for Mutual Assistance

Public Works Director Andrew Rheume introduced proposed interlocal agreement #25-064-IDS-001 with the city of Mount Vernon for mutual assistance, specifically for the painting of long straight lines on city roads, explaining that any other projects that are \$45,000 or more under this agreement would come before the Council for approval in accordance with the city's purchasing policy.

Ryan Walters moved, seconded by Anthony Young, to approve interlocal agreement #25-064-IDS-001 with the city of Mount Vernon for mutual assistance.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, Amanda Hubik, TJ Fantini. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Contract Modification: Commercial Ave Corridor Plan Phase 1 - 11th St to 13th St Design #19-095-TRN-001

Mayor Pro Tempore Moulton reminded the public that the Council had previously approved a roundabout for the intersection of Commercial Avenue and 12th Street but then changed the design to a signalized intersection after realizing the high cost of roundabout construction. Public Works Director Andrew Rheume introduced the modification to the design contract #19-095-TRN-001 for the Commercial Ave Corridor Plan Phase 1 - 11th Street to 13th Street with Alta Planning and Design, Inc, which will bring the project to 100% design and include on-call services during construction, pointing out that the increased costs are largely due to the complete re-design of a signalized intersection, which is estimated to cost \$1.8 million to construct compared to the \$5 million estimate for a roundabout.

Discussion topics included:

- Timeline of switch from roundabout to signalized intersection.
- Conduct a complete review of the project for lessons learned and process improvement.
- Grant applications associated with funding the project.
 - Transportation Improvement Board (\$1 million)
 - Bike/pedestrian grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation (~\$545k).
- Bid process.
- Construction commences a month after the bid opening.
- Traffic access to the intersection during construction.

Ryan Walters moved, seconded by Bruce McDougall, to authorize the mayor to sign the modification to contract #19-095-TRN-001 with Alta Planning and Design, Inc. for the Commercial Ave Corridor Plan Phase 1 - 11th Street to 13th Street design.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, Amanda Hubik, TJ Fantini. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Interlocal Agreement #25-085-DEF-001 for Shared Indigent Defense Services

Administrative Services Director Emily Schuh introduced the proposed interlocal agreement #25-085-DEF-001 with the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley for shared indigent defense services, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Discussion topics included:

- Working in cooperation with other municipalities to save money in difficult fiscal conditions.
- Facilitates incremental scaling as caseloads change over time.
- The Washington State Supreme Court decision is still pending, but guidance from the Washington State Bar Association was used to inform the agreement.

Bruce McDougall moved, seconded by TJ Fantini, to authorize the mayor to execute interlocal agreement #25-085-DEF-001 with the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley for shared indigent defense services.

Vote: Ayes - Carolyn Moulton, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall, Amanda Hubik, TJ Fantini. Nays - None. Abstentions - None. Result: Passed

Adjournment

There being no further business, at approximately 7:59 pm the Anacortes City Council meeting of March 10, 2025 was adjourned.