

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, with Chair Ron Wesen, Commissioner Peter Browning, and Commissioner Joe Burns present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Wesen called the proceedings to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. AGENDA:

a) *8:30 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Wesen led the attendees in the salute to the flag.

b) *8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Public Works - Michael See, Director:

1. Guemes Island Ferry 2027 Proposed Fare Schedule and Fare Setting Methodology

Assistant Public Works Director Marie Lambert and County Engineer Tom Weller were present to introduce the agenda item.

Ferry Operations Division Manager Rachel Rowe provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the 2026 draft Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report. Ms. Rowe noted that the 2026 Ferry Fare Target Report was prepared to provide a comprehensive approach to setting ferry fares for the Guemes Island Ferry in 2027. The effort was guided by Resolution No. R20230152, amended by Resolution Nos. R20250015, R20250259, and R20260089, which established a phased plan to reach a 65 percent farebox recovery rate by December 31, 2028. The resolution reflected the County's commitment to ensuring that ferry users contributed an equitable and sustainable share toward the system's operation costs.

Ms. Rowe noted that in order to meet the 65 percent recovery goal by the end of 2028, the County planned to introduce annual fare adjustments, the next proposed adjustment was scheduled for January 2027. These adjustments would be informed by a detailed revenue target calculation that accounted for contributions from the Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax and the Washington State Department of Transportation deficit reimbursement program. In addition, the Youth Ride Free program funding would be included in the 2027 fare calculation.

Ms. Rowe explained how the 2027 revenue was calculated and noted that Public Works had hired KPFF Consulting Engineers as an independent financial expert to help with the rate study, which resulted in a new fare calculation methodology using a five-year average including two future years, with a 65% fare recovery requirement by December 31, 2028.

Discussion ensued about increasing expenditures, historical and current farebox recovery methodology, farebox revenue versus road fund contributions, inflation, the qualifications of the ferry employees, after hours services, the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific, revenue target variances, after-hours service limitations, e-ticketing system, and the removal of fees for EMS calls.

The timeline and milestones were outlined and it was noted that the public comment period closed on September 22, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. It was pointed out that public comments would be evaluated and a resolution would be presented for the Board of County Commissioners' consideration on October 20, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. If approved, the new fares would take effect on January 1, 2027.

How to submit public comments: e-mail at: ferrycomments@skagitcountywa.gov or mail to: Skagit County Public Works at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

Link to PowerPoint presentation:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/CountyCommissioners/Documents/AgendaPackets/08172026.zip>

2. Miscellaneous

No miscellaneous items were presented.

Chair Wesen recessed the proceedings at 9:39 a.m.

c) [*10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Public Works - Michael See, Director:](#)

Chair Wesen reconvened the proceedings at 10:30 a.m.

Assistant Public Works Director Marie Lambert and County Engineer Tom Weller were present to introduce the agenda item.

1. [Engineering Division Updates](#)

Assistant County Engineer/Engineering Division Manager Gael Fisk provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Engineering Division's organizational chart, staffing updates, types of permits, permit applications, the 2026 projected budget, the Divisions' goals, transportation programs, tasks, responsibilities, legally required reporting, construction, design, and the 2027, 2028, and 2029 project lists.

Discussion ensued about permit fees, reducing the backlog, streamlining the permitting process, updating design standards, balancing workloads, federal and state grants, and staff retention.

Link to PowerPoint presentation:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/CountyCommissioners/Documents/AgendaPackets/08172026.zip>

2. [Transportation Benefit District Presentation](#)

Mr. Weller provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding Road 117 Fund and noted that Public Works continued to seek untapped transportation revenue sources. He highlighted the 117 Fund revenue and expenditure trends, revenue distribution, annual project costs, immediate needs, expenses, and fish barriers that required immediate remediation.

The following revenue options were presented:

- Establishment of a Transportation Benefit District
- Establishment of a Ferry Taxing District

Discussion ensued regarding the establishment of a Transportation Benefit District and a Ferry Taxing District. The Commissioners suggested that additional discussion would be needed and directed Public Works to schedule a work session to further discuss the issue.

Link to PowerPoint presentation:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/CountyCommissioners/Documents/AgendaPackets/08172026.zip>

Chair Wesen recessed the proceedings at 11:37 a.m.

3. [Miscellaneous](#)

No miscellaneous items were presented.

d) [*11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Board of County Commissioners:](#)

Chair Wesen reconvened the proceedings at 11:39 a.m.

1. [Public Comment Period](#)

Elke Macartney of Anacortes quoted from a Seattle Times article written by Dan Murphy titled *“Battery storage facilities being built in Washington without enough input,”* emphasizing the need for community meetings before Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) applications could be filed and the need for public hearings for every utility-scale battery facility.

Larita Humble of Lake Cavanaugh commented on the need to repair North Shore Drive.

Ed Johnson of Skagit County commented about the need for additional signage regarding the new speed limit change on the La Conner-Whitney Road.

Larry McKinnon of Big Lake addressed traffic concerns and the potential for drainage issues with the housing development at Big Lake.

Link to public comments submitted:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/CountyCommissioners/Documents/AgendaPackets/O8172026.zip>

2. [County and Individual Success Stories](#)

None provided.

3. [Miscellaneous \(announcements, letters, etc.\)](#)

The Commissioners commented on various past, upcoming meetings, and letters signed for the week of August 10, 2026.

III. [ADJOURNMENT:](#)

Chair Wesen adjourned the proceedings at 11:57 a.m.

*Note, to obtain an audio or video recording of this meeting; please contact the Skagit County Commissioners' office.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Ron Wesen, Chair

Peter Browning, Commissioner

Joe Burns, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board