

Charter Amendments for Whatcom County

Yes, voting recommendations for those 12 proposed amendments to our Home Rule Charter.

By [John Servais](#) · Tue Oct 28, 2025

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There are six good amendments below for us to vote APPROVED on this election. Back in 1978, the [Freeholders](#) (citizens) who drafted our county charter, appointed me as their public relations and education advisor. I attended every meeting and talked with them after meetings, and then worked with several of them to get the charter approved by the voters. I've attended one or more meetings of every Charter Review Commission over the decades. My interest is good government. And I bring this background and this perspective to these 12 proposed amendments to our Whatcom County Charter.

NO 1. [Authorizing Councilmembers to Hire Dedicated Aides](#)

This is actually the most expensive of all the proposals. The question is, can council reasonably use the staff they have now? They now have a department of 13 people, with 3-4 fulfilling the current role of doing policy research and assisting with constituent services. Does each council member need a personal staffer to answer their emails or set up meetings? Probably not. Could council members be more effective if they had some folks to do policy research? Well, they have those people, and yet they still sometimes prefer to do their own research. This amendment is just wasting tax money. The council has sufficient staff.

NO 2. [Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds](#)

This is responding to past problems instead of the new ones. This would provide an avenue for public/county employees to report problems . . . but reporting isn't the problem - solving them is. And that is the job of our county executive. So an ombuds is only as good as the county exec. Again, a waste of tax dollars.

NO 3. [Establishing Performance Audits](#)

This is one of those stupid feel good things. They will pay some consultant \$200k to tell us that some people suck at their job and some people are great. You know what could also solve this problem? Having bosses that don't suck. Because audits are only effective if leadership is willing to take action. So this is a great way to set \$200k on fire and eat up a year of time.

YES 4. [Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials](#)

This is good as it clarifies powers to our elected officials, which is helpful and moves us toward good government.

YES 5. [Modifying the Redistricting Process](#)

A good amendment. It clarifies how redistricting works. It is only done once every 10 years and is very important. Well done.

YES 6. [Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum](#)

This appropriately ties the number of signatures required for a referendum to our most recent county executive election, rather than the election of the state governor. It brings the process to our community.

YES 7. [Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments](#)

The county council has just been a pest and a pain for this Charter Review Commission. And I have seen past review commissions that were interfered with by the council. The council just cannot seem to tolerate an elected commissions of citizens doing the public's work. This amendment is needed. Protect the next Charter Review Commission from the delays, challenges, and interference that our present council caused.

NO 8. [Modifying the Budget Process](#)

This is dumb. We should let the council and executive do their jobs. Just as #7 above is about the council staying out of the business of the Charter Review Commission, this #8 finds the Commission trying to micro-manage the council and executive. A charter - which is a constitution for our county - is a general guide for government. It should not get into the weeds of processes. Again, a tax-dollar-wasting amendment. Elect good council members and a good executive and get good government.

NO 9. [Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements](#)

Gadzooks! More micro-managing. This is a way to waste money by making busy work for county government staff. Again, this sort of management does not belong in a charter or constitution. Dictating in such detail prevents better methods from being put in place by the council and executive.

YES 10. [Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings](#)

This is an excellent amendment - and will save much time for the next charter review.

YES 11. [Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment](#)

This is similar to #6 - but for charter amendments. Use our county voter turnouts to calculate initiative signature requirements, not state turnouts.

NO 12. [Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis](#)

Some consultant will get a \$200k contract to do this, but more studies are not helpful. Electing council members who prioritize and campaign on those priorities is the path to good decisions. If a study is needed, the council can initiate it. Again, the charter should not micro-manage our council and executive.

There you have it. I thought it would be mostly NOs, but it is six to six. I want to let the people I consulted with know that I appreciate their input. I did a blind scoring on my own before talking with others whose knowledge of our county and government in general I trust. We pretty much agreed. These explanations are a combination of my writing and the responses of others that I incorporated with their permission. I do regret not getting this done sooner. Better late than never.