



City of Bellingham

Keep Washington Working Act Work Group Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2026, 5:30 PM

Board Members Present:

Rebecca Agiewich

Eamon Bollinger

Ian Garconnette

Catalina Hope

Holly Pai

Scott Powell

Krystal Rodriguez

Abigail Senuty

Ex-officio Members Present:

Deborah Bineza, Strategic Initiatives Manager
for Equity and Belonging

Rebecca Mertzig, Bellingham Police Chief

Katy Potts, Western Washington Chief of Police

Justin Rasmussen, WhatComm Deputy Director

Hannah Stone, City Council President

City of Bellingham Staff, Officials, and Others Present:

Janice Keller, Deputy City Administrator

Paul Knox, Facilitator and Chair

Kim Lund, Mayor

Jackie Weller, Legislative Office Manager

Paul Knox called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Welcome and agenda review / approval

Paul welcomed the group and asked for any changes to the agenda. No changes were suggested.

Review draft Council memo and recommendations

The group began by looking at the draft report and the changes that had been incorporated since the last meeting. The group went through the report section by section. The changes suggested and agreed upon are outlined below:

Federal Contact Data

- Define the acronym CAD
- Change the first sentence of the fifth paragraph in the Background section as follows:
- ~~Though no cases in which a contact with a local agency led to immigration enforcement have been identified,~~ It is difficult to establish ~~this~~ a link between contact with a local agency and immigration enforcement because the KWWA limits collecting information on immigration status.
- In the sixth paragraph of the Background section, combine the second and third sentences and change them to read: Of 527 entries, the Work Group found that at least ~~nearly~~ 3% clearly involved immigration matters and more than 25% lacked enough detail to determine relevance. Over 10% involved Fire/EMS responses unrelated to immigration enforcement.
- Change the second bullet under recommendation 1 to read: Provide the data in a spreadsheet format with numbering to improve that allows for improved tracking and analysis."

What-Comm 911 Dispatch

- In the first paragraph of the Background section, change the third sentence to read: “The City of Bellingham manages and staffs daily operations, while the What-Comm Administrative Board provides overall oversight.”
- In the first recommendation, change the first bullet point to read: “Create a civilian position, prioritizing someone with lived experience in the immigrant community, on the What-Comm Administrative Board.”
- In the third recommendation, change the first sentence to read “The Work Group recommends increasing public messaging in multiple languages to build trust and reduce fear about calling 911”

BPD Policies and practices

- In the fifth paragraph of the Background section, change the first sentences to read: “~~To complete its work,~~ The Work Group tried to compare the original BPD Policy 417 with the Attorney General’s model policies but found ~~this difficult~~ it was difficult to reconcile the two policies for compliance with the KWWA. Soon after learning about the verification process...”
- Break up the introductory statement of the first recommendation into two sentences.
- Change the third bullet of the second recommendation to read: “Create online forms with instructions that can be translated and that can be submitted electronically and that leverage the built in translation used on the City’s website.”
- Change the fifth bullet of the second recommendation to read “Allow people to complete and submit forms in any language, with a clear statement that free translation services are available in their language.”

“Related Policy Review” document submitted by Scott Powell

After an introduction and brief review of each section, the group discussed how to integrate this document into the report. Options included adding it to an existing section, including it as a new set of recommendations, or adding it as appendix and referring to it in a recommendation. A majority of the members agreed that the document should appear as an appendix. The policies will be identified by number in the body of the recommendations and the text will refer readers to appendix for details.

In the last paragraph, change “wellness check” to “welfare check”.

Training

- Change the second to last sentence of the What-Comm Dispatch Background section to read: - Add to last paragraph of background “~~Other information has~~ training and procedural updates have been shared via training bulletins, ~~which provide updates about policies and procedures.~~”
- In the first paragraph of the Bellingham Police Department Background section, eliminate the word “statewide” in the last sentence.
- In the Bellingham Police Department Recommendations section, move the “report on progress” bullet to top of section and include in key recommendation section.
 - Change the same bullet point to read “Follow up with City Council, Mayor, and Work Group members in 2027-28 to share updates...”

Recommendations for further work outside of the scope of KWWA

- Add a recommendation that reads “Explore cost effective ways to consolidate, modernize, and

encrypt dispatch radio traffic throughout the county.”

- Change the first bullet in the first recommendation to read: “~~Require that, w~~When an officer ~~initiates~~ conducts a self-initiated stop, require that dispatch collects a brief description of the reason for the stop before the officer begins the interaction.
- Change “Chicago” to “Illinois” in second bullet of first recommendation
- Define ALPR acronym in third recommendation

Background and Appendices

The group agreed to include Holly Pai’s suggested statement regarding the 2022 cease and desist letter received by the City from the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, Columbia Legal Services, and the ACLU to the background statement. The letter itself and the City’s response will be added as appendices. A link to the KWWA will be added to the appendices as well.

Discuss and plan final Work Group Actions

- Deborah will send a final version of report by April 23.
- The group discussed whether it would be best to present their report during a daytime committee meeting of the Council or at a regular evening meeting. Members agreed it would be best to present during the evening meeting.
- Group Members discussed who would present, how long the presentation should be, and what form it should take.
 - Eamon volunteered to start on the presentation and send it out to other members ahead of the next meeting, where further details will be discussed.
 - Deborah will update Catalina and Holly, who both had to leave the meeting early.

Final thoughts and minutes approval

- Paul asked members to go around and say how they felt about the work group process and result. Comments included:
 - Subcommittees were a good idea and should have been implemented earlier
 - Pace moved slower in the beginning than they would have liked
 - Ultimately happy with the result
 - Could have used more guidance and structure
 - Staff thanked members for their work

March minutes were approved with no opposition.