

1. CALL TO ORDER/FLAG SALUTE

- The remote meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order by Chairperson Troy Meyers at 6:31 p.m. Attendance was called.

2. ATTENDANCE

- Members:
 - Mayor, Linda Springer (City of Cosmopolis)
 - Councilmember, Brandon Pauley (City of Hoquiam)
 - Mayor Elect, Bill Breedlove (City of Oakville) – Voted Remotely
 - Councilmember, Troy Meyers (City of Westport)
 - Commissioner, Rick Hole (Grays Harbor County)
 - General Manager, Ken Mehin (Grays Harbor Transit)
 - Regional Library Manager, Evi Buell (Timberland Regional Library)
- Staff:
 - Vicki Cummings, Executive Director
 - Mark Northrop, Planner II
 - Natalie Jensen, Office Coordinator
- Guests:
 - Councilmember, Sue Darcy, City of Cosmopolis
 - Joe Calodich, WSDOT Multimodal Planning Team Lead

A quorum was established.

3. GHCOG BUSINESS

- **ACTION: Approval of Current Meeting Agenda**
Chairperson Troy Meyers asked for approval of the current meeting Agenda.

Brandon Pauley made a motion to approve the current agenda; second, Ken Mehin. The motion passed unanimously.
- **ACTION: Approval of November 2025 Minutes**
Chairperson Troy Meyers asked for approval of November 2025 Minutes.

Ken Mehin made a motion to approve; second, Linda Springer. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Administrative Sub-Council Report**
Executive Director Vicki Cummings reported the Administrative Sub-Council reviewed and approved claims including monthly bills and payroll. They also held a brief executive session from 6:02 to 6:06 PM to discuss a personnel issue. The December claims and January payroll were reviewed and approved. No other action was taken.

➤ **ACTION: Approval of December 2025 Claims Batches #25-12 which includes January 2025 Payroll**

Chairperson Troy Meyers asked for approval of the December 2025 Claims Batches #25-12 in the amount of \$41,851.48.

Ken Mehin made a motion to approve; second, Brandon Pauley. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

➤ **ACTION: *Resolution #699, Approval of 2026 Final Budget**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings explained the budget remained unchanged since its initial presentation in the September board meeting. The budget shows more total revenue than expenses with an ending fund balance of \$355,216.

Brandon Pauley made a motion to approve; second, Linda Springer. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

➤ **DISCUSSION: 2026 Election of Officers**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings explained that elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary will be held in February to allow new council members to be seated. The Administrative Sub-Council will reach out to members in early February to gauge interest.

Chair, Troy Meyers offered to answer questions about any of the roles and responsibilities.

➤ **DISCUSSION: 2026 Representatives**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings explained that Natalie has requested contact information for representatives and alternates for 2026. According to bylaws, this information is required for official voting procedures. She acknowledged that some councils may have turnover and requested notification of any pending changes. Members need to provide representative information before the January meeting to comply with bylaws.

4. ALL STAFF REPORT

➤ **Vicki Cummings, Executive Director**

- Director Cummings reported significant activity since the last meeting and noted appreciation for the opportunity to present to the Grays Harbor County Commissioners, describing the discussion as productive and beneficial.
- The State Auditor's Office audit was completed with no findings, continuing GHCOG's long-standing record of clean audits. Director Cummings thanked staff for their diligence and specifically noted this was Natalie Jensen's first audit and that she performed exceptionally well.
- The EPA Limited Scope Review remains ongoing. GHCOG has submitted requested materials twice, participated in multiple meetings, and recently received an additional short-notice request for information. Staff are working to comply despite competing year-end demands.

- Staff continue bi-weekly coordination meetings with RTPO contact Robert Stevens to review recent work, upcoming tasks, and regional workload coordination.
- WSDOT is developing the 2026 Freight Systems Plan and is requesting public and local government input. An online open house, survey, and interactive mapping tool will be available through January 30, 2026. Staff will distribute participation information to members.
- The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) has opened its 2027 project application cycle, with applications due in March. Members were notified, and staff requested advance notice from jurisdictions intending to apply so RTPO coordination and support letters can be prepared.
- WSDOT has also issued a call for projects under the Regional Priority Freight System as part of the National Highway Freight Program. The application deadline is January 29, 2026. Eligible projects must be on those designated Critical Rural Freight Corridors. Staff will continue sending reminders and coordinating through the RTPO as required.
- The Brownfield Program continues to progress well. Year-end reports are being completed, including submission of the annual Federal Financial Report (SF-425), which will close out EPA reporting for the year. Staff are working to expend at least 70% of current Brownfield grant funding to maintain eligibility to apply for a new EPA Brownfields grant in 2026, noting the program's success across member communities.
- Director Cummings announced completion of the Fish Passage Barrier projects on US 12 and US 8, with all lanes now fully open.

Commissioner Hole inquired about potential brownfield cleanup activity related to the proposed pellet mill site in Hoquiam. Director Cummings explained that GHCOG's Brownfields Program focuses on site assessments and reuse planning, not cleanup, and that cleanup funding typically occurs through separate programs. Staff suggested and clarified that cleanup activity occurring on Port of Grays Harbor property near Airport Way and Polson Road is a separate project not funded through GHCOG's Brownfields grant, and staff will share a Washington Department of Ecology mapping link with commissioners.

➤ **Mark Northrop, Planner II**

Northrop provided updates on planning, GIS, and transportation activities:

- Reported on activities related to the Brownfields Program, transportation plans and programs, GIS initiatives, funding opportunities, and training.
- Developed a draft GIS shapefile identifying brownfield sites across the region included in GHCOG's grant program, noting that the program impacts over 90 parcels.
- Continued development of a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document outlining the process for STIP amendments.
- Created STIP and Surface Transportation Program maps that were incorporated into the recent presentation to the County Commissioners.
- Noted that the draft 2026–2029 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is currently available for public comment, with the comment period closing December 18, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

- Will send reminder notices in January 2026 to jurisdictions that must obligate a phase of their STP projects in 2026.
- Conducted an internal review of the GIS data warehouse and began developing an inventory of geospatial data.
- Reorganized the GIS network drive to improve mapping and geospatial analysis efficiency.
- Participated in GIS-focused training, including attendance at an ArcGIS Survey123 webinar on creating public-facing surveys.
- Plans to explore website enhancements, including incorporating interactive maps and online dashboards.
- Attended a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant workshop hosted by the National League of Cities and is preparing to pursue an SS4A grant in the coming year.
- Reminded members of CWCOC's call for projects under the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant set-aside / Transportation Alternatives Program, open through February 26, 2026, for the Southwest RTPPO area.
- Will attend an upcoming webinar hosted by the National Center for Rural Road Safety focused on improving rural road safety through data.
- Will continue monitoring and sharing funding, training, and technical assistance opportunities relevant to GHCOG members.

➤ **Natalie Jensen, Office Coordinator**

Jensen reported the following:

- Completed the monthly financial reports, finalized the State Auditor exit conference, and completed the final budget review prior to the meeting, noting that the process went smoothly with minimal adjustments.
- Attended a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant webinar to become more familiar with the program, with particular focus on financial requirements and grant administration.
- Participated in multiple EPA grant webinars covering competition processes, financial management, and budget development to ensure compliance and preparedness, particularly in light of the ongoing EPA Limited Scope Review.
- Continued managing year-end administrative tasks, including preparation and distribution of representative assignment letters, collection of updated member contact information, preparation of final budget documents for submission to the County, payroll coordination, and internal documentation updates.
- Will attend additional training sessions in January 2026.
- Will issue member dues invoices in January 2026.
- Will attend the Legislative Send-Off event on January 9, 2026, along with GHCOG staff.
- Will begin development of the 2026 Cost Allocation Plan.

5. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

➤ None.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

➤ None.

7. **MEMBER/PUBLIC COMMENT**

➤ City of Cosmopolis, Mayor Linda Springer

- Introduced Councilmember Sue Darcy serving as alternate in 2026, who attended the meeting as an observer.
- Reported that the City of Cosmopolis was awarded a \$20,000 Periodic Update Grant (PUG) and is actively working on updating its Comprehensive Plan, noting that GHCOG has been instrumental in helping move the process forward. The update will position the city to pursue additional grant opportunities.
- Announced that, due to ongoing financial challenges, the city will discontinue its independent police department and transition to a contracted law enforcement agreement with the City of Aberdeen, effective January 1, 2026.
- Noted that the interlocal agreement with Aberdeen has been successful, providing consistent engagement, reporting, and community presence. The new three-year contract will result in approximately \$200,000 in annual savings while maintaining 24/7 police coverage.
- Reported that the city recently recognized Chief Layman, who served Cosmopolis for over 27 years, and announced a retirement reception to be held on January 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the Cosmopolis Community Center (Old City Hall).
- Reported that recent storm events did not cause significant damage; the city's dam and culvert systems held, no major tree damage occurred, and staff responded to localized flooding with temporary barricades.
- Reported continued progress on the Daniels River Edge townhouse development.
- Highlighted the successful launch of a community food pantry at the Cosmopolis Community Center, organized by Councilmember Darcy, noting strong community participation and ongoing need.
- Thanked the library system for providing monthly library services at the senior luncheon, held on the first Tuesday of each month.
- Reported that the City has completed its budget season, adopted a balanced budget, and will submit required materials to MRSC and post the budget to the City's website.

➤ City of Hoquiam, Councilmember Brandon Pauley

- Reported the city voted to move forward with an ordinance to codify and better track/report transitional housing, based on a recommendation from the Planning Commission, noting the ordinance may require revisions before final adoption.
- Reported the city adjusted the marijuana buffer requirement from 1,000 feet to 500 feet (for non-school locations) to accommodate a prospective business locating near the YMCA, noting the change could support economic activity in the Harbor.
- Reported the Dahlstrom mill property was sold and the new owner will be Alta Forest Products; the city approved a lease transfer to Alta, and the transition is expected to preserve approximately 60 jobs and help keep the mill operating.
- Reported Hoquiam recently swore in several police officers, including the hiring of Officer Grove (formerly Westport), as well as additional new personnel; noted the department is at or near full staffing.

➤ City of Westport, Councilmember Troy Meyers

- Reported Westport is interviewing police chief candidates and is actively recruiting; the city is offering a \$25,000 sign-on bonus for the police chief position and providing retention bonuses for existing officers.
- Announced a New Year's Eve fireworks display scheduled for 9:00 p.m. in Westport, with refreshments planned (including cider and hot chocolate).

- Congratulated GHCOG on completion of the State audit with no findings and expressed hope the EPA review concludes soon.
 - Reported the city is exploring acquisition of state-owned parcels to facilitate housing development; the state initially offered the property to the city for \$465,000 later listed it publicly with no offers and then returned with a revised offer of \$230,000. The city is re-engaging developers to determine feasibility at the new price point.
 - Noted the potential housing site totals approximately 4.5 acres, with wetlands considerations still to be evaluated.
 - Reported the city is open to multiple housing models, including approaches such as retaining land ownership and leasing, with a goal of adding middle-income workforce housing so residents can afford to live where they work.
 - Reported a privately led shoreline stabilization project is ongoing and could stabilize approximately 2,000 linear feet of shoreline, noting strong coordination among participating property owners.
 - Shared appreciation for the year's work and conveyed holiday greetings to the group.
- Grays Harbor County, Commissioner Rick Hole
- Commissioner Hole commented on the increasing difficulty and cost for local jurisdictions to recruit and retain law enforcement, expressing concern about communities competing against one another and escalating compensation pressures.
 - Chair Meyers acknowledged the concern and shared perspective from prior professional involvement in law enforcement training, noting quality-of-life advantages in Grays Harbor County and reporting optimism regarding a strong police chief candidate interested in relocating to the area.
- Grays Harbor Transit, General Manager Ken Mehin
- Reported Grays Harbor Transit's Board approved the agency's 2026 budget on December 9, 2025.
 - Reported a new class of bus drivers will begin in mid-January, and the agency continues recruiting, noting additional applications are needed.
 - Reported participation in community holiday events, including an Aberdeen Christmas lights tour on December 6 with approximately 96 riders, and the Montesano light parade on December 13, noting photos were shared on agency social media and that a decorated bus participated.
- Timberland Regional Library, Evi Buell
- Announced holiday closures: library locations will be closed December 24–25, 2025, and January 1, 2026, to provide staff time off.
 - Highlighted Timberland Regional Library's year-end "best of 2025" and recommendations content available on the library website.
 - Reported strong participation in recent programs, including 60+ participants at events in Aberdeen and Hoquiam, and nearly 300 participants during the Montesano light festival program.
 - Reported staffing updates, including a new programming staff member in West Grays Harbor and a new regional manager/coordinating librarian in East Grays Harbor, and noted the library anticipates expanded programming and coordination going forward.
 - Confirmed after-hours library card access should continue to function during closure days, and reminded members that library cards provide access to numerous online services (including streaming options such as Kanopy).

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

Director Cummings thanked members for their participation, acknowledged the commitment of time, and wished everyone a restful holiday season.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Ken Mehin made a motion to adjourn; second, Linda Springer. Motion passed unanimously.

GRAYS HARBOR COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
115 S. Wooding St., Aberdeen, Washington 98520

_____ Troy Meyers Chairperson	_____ Date	_____ Vicki Cummings Executive Director	_____ Date
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