

1. CALL TO ORDER/FLAG SALUTE

- The remote meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order by Chairperson Troy Meyers at 6:32 p.m. Attendance was called.

2. ATTENDANCE

- Members:
 - Councilmember, David Lawrence (City of Aberdeen)
 - Mayor, Linda Springer (City of Cosmopolis)
 - Mayor, Josh Collette (City of Elma) – Voted Remotely
 - Councilmember, Brandon Pauley (City of Hoquiam)
 - Mayor, Chris Miller (City of McCleary)
 - Councilmember, Troy Meyers (City of Westport)
 - Councilmember, Frank Eshpeter (City of Westport)
 - Commissioner, Rick Hole (Grays Harbor County)
 - General Manager, Ken Mehin (Grays Harbor Transit)
 - Regional Library Manager, Evi Buell (Timberland Regional Library)
 - Director of Planning & Engineering, Kris Koski (Port of Grays Harbor) – Voted Remotely
- Staff:
 - Vicki Cummings, Executive Director
 - Mark Northrop, Planner II
 - Natalie Jensen, Office Coordinator
- Guests:
 - 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.

Ken Mehin made a motion to approve the current agenda; second, Linda Springer. The motion passed unanimously.

➤ **ACTION: Approval of October 2025 Minutes**

Chairperson Troy Meyers asked for approval of October 2025 Minutes.

Evi Buell made a motion to approve; second, Ken Mehin. The motion passed unanimously.

➤ **Administrative Sub-Council Report**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings reported that the Administrative Sub-Council met prior to the Board meeting. The November claims and December payroll were reviewed and approved. She noted a large Montrose invoice, \$130,964.64, related to the Brownfield program. Updates were provided on the State Audit and EPA Limited Scope Review. No other action was taken.

➤ **ACTION: Approval of November 2025 Claims Batches #25-11 which includes December 2025 Payroll**

Chairperson Troy Meyers asked for approval of the November 2025 Claims Batches #25-11 in the amount of \$169,624.68.

Ken Mehin made a motion to approve; second, Linda Springer. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

➤ **DISCUSSION: Audit Update**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings reported that the state audit is wrapping up, with the exit conference scheduled for 1:00 P.M. on Monday, December 2nd, 2025 and members are invited to sit in on the Zoom Meeting. An invitation was sent out Tuesday the 18th. This time Grays Harbor Council of Governments had both an Accountability Audit as well as a financial review, with a close review of our payroll and processes. This audit covered FY2022-2024, with 2024 being the first year that the COG managed our own payroll. This process went well and was a pleasant experience.

Cummings further noted the EPA Limited Scope Review (technically not an audit), is moving forward to the next step. The EPA uses an independent third-party agency to perform the review and GHCOG has supplied them with all items they have requested. They have reviewed those items and are packaging it all up for the EPA to assess. We are now waiting to hear back from the EPA, as it will take them up to a month to evaluate all of the submitted documents. Due to the holidays, we won't expect this to be completed until January.

NEW BUSINESS

➤ **DISCUSSION: 2026 Representative Update and Election Process**

Executive Director Vicki Cummings described the schedule for the next few months. In December, the Board reviews the upcoming budget and approves it going forward. Also, during the month of December, updates to the Member Representative Designations are made via email/in writing, and an email will be sent out to each member agency to facilitate this process. These should be updated no later than the third week of January. In January, the new Members will attend their first meeting, and the elected positions will be explained in further detail. In February we will hold the elections for the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Secretary. This group represents the Administrative Sub-council that meets 30 minutes before the monthly meetings.

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

4. ALL STAFF REPORT

➤ **Vicki Cummings, Executive Director**

Cummings reported a very active month in several major program areas:

- Continued coordination and documentation for the State Audit and EPA Limited Scope Review, both occurring simultaneously.

- Monthly Brownfield Coalition coordination meeting. GHCOG's Brownfields Program remains extremely active with 42 sites across 92 parcels, currently the highest workload statewide and in Region 10.
- Supporting the Transportation Alternatives Grant Program coordination through the RTPO and approved the grant cycle. Announced that Mark Northrop will be participating on the review committee for that program.
- Ongoing work and collaboration on the SR 105 National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, including in-house editing, layout, and quality review. GHCOG is producing a polished final product for public review. SW region WSDOT will submit the plan before December 31 for potential National Scenic Byway designation.
- Assisted the City of Cosmopolis with Comprehensive Plan and regulatory review, recommendations and answered questions. Will continue to support the city with this process.
- Presented at the Port of Grays Harbor Commission meeting that went very well, and currently preparing for a presentation to the Grays Harbor County Commission on December 2.

➤ **Mark Northrop, Planner II**

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

- Participated in the monthly Brownfields Program meeting and noted recent media coverage in the Daily World of the Elma Theater project.
- Working toward creation of an in-house GIS dataset of all Brownfield sites for member use.
- Reviewed the draft SR 105 Corridor Management Plan and produced updated maps for inclusion.
- Coordinated with CWCOG regarding STIP amendment procedures, including development of GHCOG's internal STIP SOP documentation.
- Announced the release of the 2026–2029 STIP for 30-day public comment (through December 19). Reminded members this is the final step in the process before it is submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transportation Administration for approval.
- Attended Washington State Joint Agency GIS Day and began internal review of GHCOG GIS datasets.
- Attended training webinars including ArcGIS for Microsoft 365 and upcoming Survey123 training.
- Reported that CWCOG opened the Transportation Alternatives Program call for projects, open through February 26, 2026. An announcement has been posted on the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum website (CWCOG.org) website.
- Will attend the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant workshop on December 11, hosted by the National League of Cities.

➤ **Natalie Jensen, Office Coordinator**

Jensen reported the following:

- Completed standard monthly financials.
- Processed employee medical open enrollment.
- Participated in Brownfields Coalition meetings.

- Engaged deeply in documentation requests and coordination for both the State Audit and EPA Limited Scope Review, helping prepare new procedural documentation for future audits.
- Completed extensive editing, layout, and photo integration for the SR 105 Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, including proofreading the full document and preparing it for public review. Took project-related field photographs for inclusion in the corridor plan. Encouraged members to take a look at the plan when it is made available for public review.

5. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

- None.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

- None.

7. MEMBER/PUBLIC COMMENT

- City of Aberdeen, Councilmember David Lawrence
 - The Market Street sidewalk and landscaping project is nearly complete, including tree plantings and improved streetscape.
 - The Council approved the final design for the US-12 Railroad Separation Project, a long-awaited milestone.
- City of Cosmopolis, Mayor Linda Springer
 - The River's Edge (Daniel's) housing development is progressing.
 - Multiple property owners have expressed interest in additional development, prompting a review of permit and rate structures, some dating back to 1990–1991.
 - The city is nearing completion of a balanced 2026 budget.
 - Ongoing work on the Stormwater Comprehensive Plan continues with Cindy Kaiser, with strong collaboration from the Department of Commerce and GHCOG. Looking to apply for a PUG grant to help with funding of the Comp Plan update.
 - The city continues addressing I&I (Inflow & Infiltration) challenges.
 - EPA recently inspected the Cosmo mill site for chemical storage conditions; a report is expected within weeks.
 - Noted a recent theft at the mill of approximately \$300,000 in copper wire.
 - A sea lion appearing at Blue Slough became a local sensation, featured widely in news and social media.
 - Cosmopolis is recruiting for a Clerk Treasurer (part-time 3–4 days/week).
- City of Elma, Mayor Josh Collette
 - The Elma Theater demolition began November 10 and is expected to be completed by Thanksgiving.
- City of Hoquiam, Councilmember Brandon Pauley
 - The city processed zoning boundary adjustments to allow a proposed marijuana grow operation to meet 1,000-foot buffer requirements.
 - Approved a bid to replace approximately 30% of city water meters with radio-read meters following a successful pilot.
 - Extended the moratorium on transitional housing as the city continues discussions with the Moore Wright Group regarding redevelopment of a hotel property.

- Provided updates on the long-running pellet mill permitting process, noting the latest ORCA determination was upheld but may be appealed further by the same group, Friends of Grays Harbor.
- City of McCleary, Mayor Chris Miller
 - Closed the RFQ process for the next phase of the Lower 3rd Street project; three firms submitted proposals, Skillings, SCJ Alliance, and Gray & Osborne.
 - Awaiting results of the TIB sidewalk grant application.
 - Two annexation proposals are under consideration for residential development, both owned by the same developer, Mark Studer.
 - The Port Blakely property annexation has already passed Boundary Review Board requirements; the second property (Ranch at Camp Creek) may still require Board review.
 - Estimated residential capacity ranges from 65–70 homes (half-acre lots) in one development but up to 160, significantly more in earlier proposals.
 - Discussed long-term industrial development interest from Rognlin's on adjacent property of 450 acres south of the Ranch at Camp Creek property.
- City of Westport, Councilmember Troy Meyers
 - Thanked Commissioner Hole for recent assistance to Westport residents concerning shoreline protection issues.
 - Provided an update on dynamic revetment shoreline erosion protection, noting strong performance and future expansion potential.
 - Shared insights from a recent SWRTPO meeting regarding the Washington Traffic Safety Commission's crash data dashboards. Shared the URL: wtsc.wa.gov/dashboards
 - Offered information to Hoquiam regarding Westport's 15-year water meter replacement cycle.
 - Raised discussion regarding Flock license-plate reader cameras, transparency dashboards, and emerging public concerns over privacy.
- Grays Harbor County, Commissioner Rick Hole
 - Thanked Chair Meyers for his leadership with Westport by the Sea, noting it as a strong example of successful private coastal investment.
 - Stated that with declining state and federal funding, communities must increasingly “do it ourselves,” and the County aims to support local efforts where possible.
 - Reported that the County is deep in budget development, describing the financial outlook as “bleak,” and is working hard to identify ways to slow or reduce fiscal impacts.
 - Highlighted serious concerns about the County’s large number of aging bridges, including:
 - Many are nearing end of life
 - Several now have load limits or one-lane restrictions
 - Funding for replacements is difficult to secure
 - Requested GHCOG assistance in:
 - Identifying grant opportunities
 - Supporting project development and grant writing
 - Exploring potential state or federal bridge funding programs
 - Asked about the implications of upgrading the SR 105 Scenic Byway from state scenic to national scenic designation.
 - Learned that the designation is primarily a marketing and visibility tool, offering:
 - Greater tourism exposure
 - More promotional opportunities
 - No additional regulatory restrictions on development

- Expressed interest in reading the completed corridor management plan and thanked staff for their work.

Vicki Cummings explained that the corridor management plan is similar to a marketing strategy plan in that it encourages investors and visitors and increases exposure of the area.

Chair Meyers noted that the SWRTPO bridge assessment showed Grays Harbor County has 350+ bridges, representing over 4% of all bridges in Washington despite the county being under 3% of the state's land area, with nearly 1 in 10 rated in poor condition

➤ Grays Harbor Transit, General Manager Ken Mehin

- Reported that the Transit Board unanimously approved the fare-free policy for 2026, marking the fourth consecutive year of fare-free service and noting strong public support, including nearly 900,000 riders last year.
- Expressed appreciation for the positive feedback and thanked Commissioner Hole for his support during the vote.

➤ Timberland Regional Library, Evi Buell

- Reported a minor internal reorganization within Timberland Regional Library, noting no changes for West Grays Harbor, and announced that a new East Grays Harbor Regional Manager will begin on December 1, succeeding long-time manager Dee.

8. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Brandon Pauley made a motion to adjourn; second, Ken Mehin. Motion passed unanimously.

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



01/07/2026

Troy Meyers
Chairperson

Date



12/19/2025

Vicki Cummings
Executive Director

Date

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Final Audit Report

2026-01-07

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