

How to Make Effective Public Comments

Whether you're speaking to the County Council at a public hearing or sending an email, the same guidelines apply in making effective public comments. Speaking to the Council directly is generally more impactful, unless you're attempting to share a lot of information with cited references.

The best thing you can do is send an email or bring 8 copies of the email to the public hearing to give to the County Council and the County Clerk, and mention the email in your public comment. The Council email address is Council@co.whatcom.wa.us.

Four Elements

- **INTRO:** Who are you? Where do you live? What are you speaking about tonight?
- **WHY:** What is your "ask" for the Council? How will this decision impact you personally, and how will it impact the greater good?
- **MORE DETAIL:** Include outside references or your own expertise/view as a county resident regarding this decision.
- **CLOSING:** Reiterate your position. Thank the County Council for their attention.

Additional Pointers

- 1. BE CONCISE:** As mentioned above, you have only three minutes to get your point(s) across to the Council, otherwise you will be cut off when the Clerk announces time. It's easy to get off track from what you're trying to convey, which is why **writing out your comment and timing yourself** before the meeting makes a difference. Try to stick to no more than three topics/points in your comment.
- 2. SPEAK SLOWLY:** This is another reason why practicing your comment before the meeting is important. The Council values your testimony and they know you're taking time out of your evening to make a comment. Additionally, the **County Clerk needs to understand what you're saying** in order to record it for the public record.
- 3. BE POLITE:** Making accusatory "you" statements, such as "You should do (xyz)," is not helpful and undermines the key points of your public comment. If you're frustrated with something the Council has or has not acted upon, then **it's better to rephrase your comment** as "I hope you consider doing (xyz) because (abc)." Alienating the County Council does not work in your favor.
- 4. TELL YOUR STORY:** It is important to **state that you're a resident of Whatcom County**, especially if you live in a particular community that will be impacted by a County Council policy or action, or a lack of one. Additionally, if a policy or action has a direct impact to you, or if you have expertise in a certain industry or profession, be sure to mention it.

Cherry Point is a targeted route for export of tar sands, fracked gas, crude oil, propane and coal.

The Moratorium is a temporary hold on permits for projects whose purpose is to increase shipments of unrefined fossil fuels not to be processed or consumed at Cherry Point. The county is undergoing a study to determine legal ways the County can protect public health and safety from increased shipments of fossil fuels. Next year's County Council will decide what to do with the results of the study.

Unrefined fossil fuel exports would bring more bomb trains through our towns, more pipelines through rivers and farmland, and more tanker traffic through the Salish Sea, while threatening local jobs in fishing, farming, and oil refining.

Crude Oil Export Ban

After heavy lobbying by Big Oil, Congress lifted the federal ban on crude oil export. Now, companies can send America's energy reserves offshore to be refined cheaper by foreign refineries with weaker standards to protect workers and the environment. As a result, both labor unions and environmentalists stood against the oil industry's effort to lift the crude oil export ban.

Cherry Point has been cited in government and industry reports as a prime route to export tar sands and crude oil because of existing infrastructure and geography. This will undermine the job security of the refinery workers, and threaten our safety with even more oil trains moving through our communities.

Companies blocked by the moratorium:

- **Kinder Morgan** is expected to expand tar sands diluent bitumen shipments by pipeline to Cherry Point
- **Williams, Inc.** has proposed a fracked gas pipeline from Sumas to Vancouver Island for export.
- **Petrogas** has recently begun exporting propane through the former Intalco pier at Cherry Point, bringing explosive propane trains from other states through Whatcom for export.
- **SSA Marine** has stated intentions to build a new shipping pier, which would expand oil export capacity.
- **British Petroleum (BP)** has threatened to cut jobs at the refinery and export crude oil through Cherry Point

It's up to our County Council to protect farms, rivers, and homes from new pipelines and crude export expansions. Urge Whatcom County Council to extend this moratorium and take further action following completion of a legal study into their powers to protect the public from increased shipments of unrefined fossil fuels.

Public safety: Unrefined export will mean more trains, pipelines, and tankers through our communities, increasing risks of spills and explosions and degrading quality of life even as our local demand for fossil fuels continues to decline.

Economy: expanding export of unrefined oil & gas will not create long-term jobs locally, but will hurt fisheries and drive away other businesses. Even one oil spill would cause billions in economic losses.

Environment: The Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve is a spawning ground for herring, critical to the Salish Sea ecosystem. More ships, trains and pipelines threaten to destroy habitat and cultural resources.