

**PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT No. 1  
of Whatcom County**

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING FOR  
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 OF WHATCOM COUNTY**

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Commissioners (“Commission”) of Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County (“District”) will hold a Special Meeting on **Friday, May 16, 2025 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the district’s office, located at 1705 Trigg Road, Ferndale, WA. The meeting will be hybrid in person and zoom.**

The purpose of the Special Meeting will be to:

1. Hold a Vision Workshop to work on the PUD’s vision and mission statements.

The special meeting is anticipated to last three (3) hours **(The length of the meeting is approximate and subject to change.)**

**Notice:**

All Commissioners will participate either via Zoom/internet or teleconference.

**The public meeting can be accessed;**

**By internet: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88332826008>**

*Note: if attending via zoom we would appreciate your full name for the commission record though it is not required.*

**Or telephone:** Dial 1 (253) 215 8782 or 1 (253) 205 0468

**Webinar ID:** 883 3282 6008

Jaime's

"Envisioning a sustainable and equitable future, Whatcom PUD commits to empowering our community through transparent governance, strategic growth in clean energy and water stewardship. Together, we will build a resilient infrastructure that enriches lives, protects our vital resources, and ensures no one is left behind as we navigate the challenges of tomorrow."

Atul:

Our vision for Whatcom 2050 is to cultivate a resilient, livable, and safe community through innovative infrastructure development that prioritizes renewable resources, collaborative utility management, and comprehensive water solutions. By positioning the Public Utility District as a trusted partner, we aim to enhance broadband access, improve energy and water supply, and ensure active public engagement, ultimately transforming the PUD into a thriving municipal utility that meets the evolving needs of our county.

Chris:

The Whatcom County PUD envisions a resilient and sustainable future for our community, where innovative water and electric services support a thriving, carbon-neutral economy. We are dedicated to adapting to climate change challenges, ensuring reliable resources for all residents, and fostering environmental stewardship for generations to come. Together, we will harness technology and collaboration to create a balanced ecosystem that meets the evolving needs of our diverse population.

# Vision of 2050

Chris Heimgartner

## State of the World in 2050

World population is 9.5 billion and appears to have peaked. Indonesia, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Latin America are experiencing slower growth, with most developed nations in decline from slight (USA and Canada) to severe (Japan, Russia, China, and India).

China finally hit peak carbon (they claim) in 2045, with a total output of 75 billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Base temperatures are over 3 degrees C higher than pre-industrial times and forecast to hit 7 degrees C in the 2070 timeframe and stabilize at about 9 degrees C by 2150.

Sea levels are up 10 centimeters over 2000 levels and forecast to be a full meter by 2100, and 10 to 20 meters by 2500 (when temperatures are forecast to return to below 1.5 degrees C rise from pre-industrial averages).

Glaciation worldwide is in retreat. While summer flows are still adequate in the Indus, Yellow, Mekong, and Irrawaddy, more than half the ice is gone at elevation and summer flows are declining. Rain has been observed every year at the top of the Greenland ice-sheet since 2035. 2023 was the first year rain was ever recorded there. The ice sheet on Greenland is in rapid retreat with dozens of square kilometers of new land exposed each year. Although the ice sheet on Antarctica is not measurably thinning, the glaciers are moving much faster and iceberg calving at the face of Antarctic glaciers has more than doubled in the last 15 years.

Closer to home, there is no snow remaining below 10,000 foot elevation by late August on Mt. Baker. Natural flows at low flow on the South Fork of the Nooksack are zero for many weeks at the end of each summer and beginning of fall. The Middle and North forks have much reduced late season flows, but not yet zero. Total precipitation for the Cascades has increased a few percent since 2000, but with much less snow and more frequent and severe flood events.

The key mantra with regard to climate change is “adaptation” throughout Whatcom County. Climate change is here and will continue apace for decades more even after humanity has gone carbon neutral. Whatcom County has effectively transitioned most transportation, much of the built environment, and all the new build, to carbon neutral. This was done without much local action, instead simply riding on policy generated at the State and Federal levels.

Whatcom PUD will have two lines of business, electric and water, and here is how they will look:

### **Water Line of Business**

Our Industrial System feeds Cherry Point today. While demands from the refineries have declined, new firms, including new fusion power plants, are consuming industrial water and our deliveries are now over 30,000,000 gpd (an all-time high). Both plants and the transmission pipe system have been expanded over the last 25 years to meet demand.

The Grandview system has continued in decline. The business parks themselves are being looked at for re-development. If a full redevelopment occurs we will build a modern system to serve Grandview at locally competitive rates.

14 small systems have approached us to take them over. 4 were referred to the County as a supplier of last resort and final disposition is waiting on them. We took over the other 10 and are now managing over 200 potable customers among the various systems. We expect this to increase to about 10 per decade asking us to assume ownership or take over management or administration.

### **Electric Line of Business**

Our electric transmission business has expanded throughout Cherry Point. Initially we extended our 115kv system to serve the first fusion power plant of 50 Mw. We then extended the 230kv off the old Intalco bus and now have a 230kv loop in Cherry Point supporting two inter-tied 115kv loops. All told, this system serves over 500 Mw of load/generation.

In 2032 PSE approached the District about buying the electric distribution business. Negotiations concluded in 18 months with terms acceptable to both parties. Various intervenor groups, including the UTC attempted to change the terms or cancel the deal but by 2037 the last cases had been dismissed. The District assumed full electric distribution for Whatcom County on January 31, 2040. Average load for the County today (excluding the Cherry Point transmission system, and the municipal systems of Sumas, Blaine, and the Lummi Nation) is 350 aMw.

We own a slice of the Mt. Baker Geothermal Station (100 Mw capacity, 88 aMw), the dedicated output of two of the fusion plants (200 aMw), 21 aMw from BPA due to reduced production from the Columbia system, and 200 Mw nameplate (30 aMw) from dozens of smaller reservoirs operated as run of the river systems on the Nooksack tributaries (more below). The balance we buy or sell in the SPP western market (we also belong to their ISO), tagged and dispatched through TEA.

## **Adjudication**

By the late 2020's climate adaptation had been recognized as a driving force in the Nooksack Basin. A group of the largest claimants in the adjudication all agreed that storage was needed to mimic the snowpack we were going to lose. The parties recognized that the storage needed to be widely dispersed to preserve individual tributaries and be high enough in elevation to keep cold enough to mimic snow melt.

After initial quick success on Bertrand Creek and Springsteen Lake, two or three new small reservoirs have been proposed every year since 2030. As part of the settlement of the Adjudication, a County Water Board was established to oversee surface and groundwater diversions, and the establishment of additional new reservoirs. All claims were stipulated valid and subordinated to the Water Board.

The Water Board administers claims and directs releases to ensure that there is sufficient quality water for fish, farms, and communities in Whatcom County. The District agreed to own and manage the reservoirs and the power generating impoundment structures (dams). As noted above these generators are a

significant source of energy for the County although the system as a whole operates at a slight loss that is recovered through taxation.

## **The District**

Today we have over 300 water customers and nearly 30 employees serving them. We have over 100,000 electric customers and nearly 120 people serving them. We also have 40 general and administrative people supporting other employees or directly serving customers.

## **Jaime's Vision for the Future of Whatcom PUD**

### **“Putting the Public Back into Public Utilities”**

As a Public Utility District Commissioner, I see Whatcom PUD as a vehicle for public good—a utility grounded in transparency, sustainability, and service to the people of Whatcom County. As we look toward a 25-year strategic horizon, I believe we must plan boldly, with long-term investments that support equity, climate resilience, and community strength.

### **Electric Power: Growing with Intention**

I believe Whatcom PUD should grow its electric business—intentionally and strategically. We are already facing rising energy costs, climate-related disruptions, and a growing need for local energy sovereignty. I don't want us to wait for the grid to fail us—I want us to lead.

I support organic growth along existing infrastructure as a natural starting point.

I believe we should target areas like Cherry Point, where we can meet industrial needs while holding those partnerships to high environmental standards.

Long-term, I want us to explore becoming a countywide provider, with respect for existing public providers in places like Blaine, Sumas, and—if they choose—Lummi Nation.

At the same time, I want to see the PUD invest now in clean, local generation and storage—geothermal, solar, wind, tidal—recognizing that permitting and construction timelines can span 10 to 20 years. We need to start early to deliver results later.

We must also build in equity, by creating a robust utility bill assistance fund for low-income households, so that no one is left behind as we transition to a cleaner energy future.

### **Water: Leadership through Stewardship**

Water is our most critical and endangered resource. With our large and senior water right on the Nooksack River, Whatcom PUD is uniquely positioned to protect this resource—and I believe we have a responsibility to do so.

I support growing our water service footprint, especially where we can preserve instream flows, support salmon recovery, or mitigate drought and flood impacts.

We should look at targeted expansion near Cherry Point and selective acquisition of small or vulnerable systems, both inside and potentially beyond Whatcom County.

I want us to explore partnerships with larger systems like Ferndale or Bellingham where it makes sense, particularly to build watershed-scale solutions.

We cannot wait for adjudication to solve the crisis of declining summer flows and winter flooding. I support pursuing tools like the “Foster Fix” and leveraging our water rights now to act in the community’s interest. This work will require strong, proactive relationships with local tribes, agencies, and lawmakers.

### **Telecommunications: A Responsible Exit**

While we are likely to exit the telecommunications business within the next five years, I believe we still have a role to play in supporting broadband equity.

I support prioritizing “Dig Once” policies and ensuring open-access infrastructure is considered during public works and permitting processes.

As we step away from direct telecom operations, we should remain a facilitator and advocate for affordable, high-speed broadband in rural and underserved communities.

### **Workplace Culture: Creating a Dream Environment**

We talk often about building a “Dream Team” at the PUD—but that starts with a “Dream Environment.”

I envision the PUD as a healthy, professional, and compassionate workplace, with strong HR systems and a dedicated Community Relations role.

I want staff to feel supported and proud of their work, with competitive pay and benefits, and a culture of respect and shared purpose.

### **Community Education & Workforce Development**

I want the PUD to be a more visible presence in the community—not just as a service provider, but as a source of knowledge and opportunity.

I envision partnerships with local schools to teach students about electricity, water cycles, and climate resilience.

I want to build relationships with colleges and trade schools to help train and recruit the next generation of utility workers, engineers, and technicians.

### **Looking to the Future**

As the needs of our county evolve, I'm open to exploring new lines of business that align with our mission—whether it's energy efficiency programs, regional resilience planning, or new technologies that emerge over the coming decades. Any new venture must be rooted in public benefit and long-term sustainability.

My vision is for a PUD that doesn't just provide services—but enriches lives, protects resources, and builds a better future for everyone in Whatcom County. With the right planning and partnerships, I believe we can get there.

*I also think we should look at a Regional Water Reclamation Facility but know my idea is unlikely to gain traction, so I add it here as a sidenote.*

# Atul's Thoughts on the Future of the PUD

## Background

- The PUD was conceived as a county wide municipal utility.
- The PUD started as an industrial utility which served a slice of Whatcom County
- Over the last 6 years, the PUD has been gradually expanding its scope to address water resources, broadband, and energy

## My Values

- I believe in government as infrastructure.
- I believe government should try to avoid increasing dependency on government.
- I believe government should create clear boundaries in which the private sector can operate which encourages competition. Where that competition is not feasible it is better for the public sector to provide services or those services to have utility oversight.
- I/Whatcom County residents believe (1) telecommunications infrastructure is essential (2) we must improve energy supply (3) we need water for fish, farms, and people.
- I believe that the PUD should provide alternatives for utility services where appropriate.

## My 25-Year Outcomes

We should lead the development of Whatcom 2050 Infrastructure. A plan that calls for infrastructure action by all the local governments and corporations that makes our community more resilient, livable, and safe. Areas of focus should be:

- Exploring renewable resources with priority: on geothermal and storage.
- Supporting utility municipalization by local and tribal governments.
- Support and collaborate with local governments on bio-based energy.
- Water supply solutions involving storage, retiming of water, and reasonable use
- Acquisition of water systems where appropriate
- Improving water supply through storage and retiming
- Collaborating with other local governments in attracting new industry that are well matched to our evolving climate and community.
- Help advance broadband infrastructure.
- Help expand competition in retail markets.
- Help advance telecommunications infrastructure to improve gaps in health care.

## How the PUD Should Look

- I want the PUD to be a resource to the whole community.
- I want employees that enjoy serving the entire county.
- I want much more public participation in the PUD.
- I want commissioners be the liaison with local, state, federal government.
- I want the commissioners to develop the policy for the PUD (not the GM).

## **My Vision for the PUD in 2050**

I want the PUD to look a lot more like a typical utility providing services and infrastructure in broadband, energy, and water. I want the PUD to have figured out how to improve the energy supply. I want the PUD to be a stable and effective service provider. I hope that the PUD in 2050 will be on the other side of a growth spurt that allowed it to achieve the original purpose which was to be a County Wide Municipal Utility.

I want the PUD to be known for providing excellent services in improving water, broadband, and energy supply to our county. I want the old timers to say that around 2020 the PUD began an effort to return to the original purpose of a PUD and provide public utilities to the entire county. Now in 2050, our PUD looks a lot more like every other public utility. The PUD figured out how to bring public retail ISP to our county using open access agreements. The PUD identify more local and cleaner power supply. The PUD helped expand water supply for fish, farms, and the public. The PUD is a stable and reliable partner in expanding supply into the future.