



BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Agenda Meeting

Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 2:00 pm

BOCC Conference Room, Room 232, 128 N 2nd Street, Yakima, WA 98901 or Zoom

12/16/2025 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting Called to Order at 2:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair Kyle Curtis, Commissioner LaDon Linde, Commissioner Amanda McKinney, Legal Counsel Dan Clark, Legal Counsel Stefanie Weigand, Clerk of the Board Julie Lawrence, Briahna Murray (Gordon Thomas Honeywell), Representative Alex Ybarra, Senator Nikki Torres, Representative Gloria Mendoza, and guests.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment Received.

3. 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA DISCUSSION & BRIEFING WITH MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

The Board of Yakima County Commissioners discussed their draft 2026 legislative agenda with members of the legislative delegation.

2026 Legislative Agenda:

The Yakima County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) believes that the Legislature must act to protect public safety, lower residents' tax burden, restrict the use of drugs, make housing more affordable through de-regulation, maintain existing and construct new road infrastructure, and protect private property rights. The Commissioners will continue to work closely with the members of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Legislative Districts and jointly advocate for Yakima County residents on these topics. Separately, this Legislative Agenda is focused on specific Legislative actions to enable the BOCC to more efficiently and effectively provide critical county services to our residents.

Key Objectives:

Potential Capital Funding Requests: Identify capital funding requests (construction that is not transportation-oriented) in each legislative district. For the 2026 legislative session, funding requests should be \$50,000-\$250,000 and urgent in nature. Alternatively, identifying requests now for 2027 allows ample advocacy time; a request targeted for 2027 should be \$500,000-\$1.5 million.

Liability: Yakima County has experienced rising insurance rates and expanded litigation and settlement costs as a result of increased liability from new and expanded state laws. The County joins other stakeholders in calling on the Legislature to consider revisions to reduce liability and lower insurance rates.

Indigent Defense: This costs the County about \$8 million dollars a year, yet the state only reimburses Yakima County \$275,000 for indigent defense services, placing a heavy burden on the County's limited discretionary budget. The County will continue to emphasize the importance that the state provide additional funding for these services, particularly if the Supreme Court adopts new caseload standards that reduce the workforce available to handle these cases. The County encourages the state to also explore whether the definition of indigent could be

re-defined to address cost while still providing services to those in need. Additionally, Yakima County, like other rural parts of the state, struggles to attract and maintain public attorneys. These positions are crucial to the functioning of our justice system and the protection of public safety. Yakima County supports Legislative actions to help recruit and retain public attorneys in rural areas, including exploring student loan repayment mechanisms.

Water Availability: Yakima County requests state funding and leadership to ensure water availability throughout the state. Yakima County and the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan stand as strong examples of the costs associated with diminishing water supply. The state should increase funding to ensure all water basins have long-term water availability. Additionally, Yakima County joins counties throughout the state to request that funding be restored to the water banking program.

Superior Court Judge Authorization: Yakima County has requested an additional Superior Court Judge, for a total of nine full-time judges. The number of superior court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of full- and part-time judges in a county's superior court is determined by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA). The BJA's recommendation is based on an objective workload analysis developed annually by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The objective workload analysis takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the court.

Require Renewable Energy Projects to Acquire Water Rights Before Project Approval: Currently, renewable energy projects may be approved by the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) before water rights are acquired. These projects often require significant water resources, and approving these projects before water right acquisition creates uncertainty among water suppliers and existing water rights holders on how their supply will be affected by these significant projects. Yakima County asks the Legislature to require renewable energy projects to have water rights acquired before EFSEC may approve a project.

Important Topics to Watch:

Yakima County will emphasize the importance of the following issues when they are brought up for discussion by the Legislature.

East-West Corridor: The Legislature allocated \$55 million to the East-West Corridor. The adopted 2025-27 Transportation Budget allocates \$20 million in 2025-27, and \$35 million in 2027-29. The County advocates for

Yakima Basin Integrated Plan: The 2025-27 Capital Budget allocated \$52.02 million to the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. The County will closely follow the implementation of this funding, and ongoing support of the integrated plan.

Economic Vitality: Rural counties are challenged to attract jobs. The state's recently enacted policies and tax code changes have made it challenging to attract and retain businesses in Yakima County and Washington State. Yakima County joins other stakeholders in expressing these impacts and calling on changes.

Rental Policies: Explore how to establish legal resources for landlords, and whether existing landlord mitigation funding can be allocated in a geographically equitable manner.

Strengthen the Involuntary Treatment Act: Under current law, individuals must meet involuntary detention criteria after an evaluation by a designated crisis responder and must be treated at a State-certified secure detoxification facility. If no bed capacity exists, the law does not provide other options for involuntary detention and/or treatment. The law should specify that a person with a history of fentanyl addiction and experiencing a life-threatening overdose should be assumed to be gravely disabled and subject to involuntary detention.

Jail Medical Costs: Yakima County joins other counties in expressing support for policies and funding, including establishing a new insurance coverage option, to reduce jail medical costs and ensure jail medical services continue to be available in Washington State. County jail healthcare costs have skyrocketed due to a medical malpractice insurance market failure and limited competition.

Behavioral Health: While progress has been made in recent years, there remains a great need for investment and support of the community behavioral health system in Washington. Yakima County supports budget and policy opportunities to support functional and accessible community behavioral health and crisis response systems, including increasing reimbursement rates to support a robust workforce, securing funding to ensure adequate facilities, and other investment opportunities that advance behavioral health & crisis response services.

Public Works Procurement Bid Thresholds: Yakima County joins other counties in the state to ask that the public works cost threshold for counties align with cities. For example, second-class cities can procure public works

without calling for bids when the estimated cost does not exceed \$75,500 for a single craft or trade, and \$150,000 for multiple crafts and trades.

4. NEW BUSINESS

No New Business.

5. ADJOURN

Meeting Adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

All regular agenda meetings are recorded and will be available to view on the BOCC website at <https://www.yakimacounty.us/AgendaCenter/Board-of-Commissioners-2>.

APPROVED DATE

DATE/Minutes

JAN 13 2026

BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

LaDon Linde, Chair

Amanda McKinney, Commissioner

Kyle Curtis, Commissioner
*Constituting the Board of County Commissioners
for Yakima County, Washington*

Attest:

Julie Lawrence, Clerk of the Board *or*
Erin Franklin, Deputy Clerk of the Board