

**Whatcom County
Council Planning and Development Committee**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Committee Minutes - Final

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

2 PM

Hybrid Meeting

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 2:55 P.M; MAY BEGIN EARLY
(PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON AT 311 GRAND AVENUE SUITE 101, SEE REMOTE
JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR CALL
360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Tyler Byrd
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Member Kaylee Galloway called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Clerk's note: Elenbaas was present but came after the call to order.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Tyler Byrd, Ben Elenbaas, and Kaylee Galloway

Absent: None

Also Present: Barry Buchanan, Todd Donovan, Carol Frazey, and Kathy Kershner

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2023-140](#) Report from the Planning and Development Services Department
Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Department Director, reported and answered whether permit review timelines may be extended because of Planning Department staffing shortages, whether PDS has a grasp on why they have lost staff and are having a hard time recruiting, what steps we need to take or what plan we have to get to the point that the department is fully staffed, whether there has been any consideration of doing an internship program in PDS, whether they have engaged with state agencies such as the Department of Commerce and picked their brain about how to address the staff shortage, and whether any of the state legislative bills currently being considered will make it easier or helpful for customers to get permits done in a less frustrating manner.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2023-121](#) Resolution docketing Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation amendments
Matt Aamot, Planning and Development Services Department, presented and answered whether the experiments with increasing densities in the Birch Bay Urban Growth Area (UGA) have been attractive to developers, what other areas of the county PLN2023-00002 ("Zoning Code Density and Lot Size Amendments") would apply to besides the Birch Bay UGA, and whether this is a first step toward increasing densities in other UGAs that have not been annexed by cities without affecting the services provided.

Kershner commented on the craziness of building out Birch Bay when it is not a city but is a UGA. She would like to see a path where Birch Bay can become its own city and then make these decisions for themselves rather than the County taking on more high density UGAs that will cost us more money to service. She would prefer to see the cities taking on more growth instead of the Birch Bay Community.

Aamot answered what role the County should be playing in the development of water and sewer infrastructure if the cities are not stepping up to do it, whether most of the growth in Birch Bay is serviced by the Birch Bay Water and Sewer District, whether the previous "Mineral Resource Lands Expansion - North Star Rd." project as referenced in the Memo and presentation will be dealt with in the Comprehensive Plan update, and at what point the County may consider legislative policy directions of bills that do not pass in the Legislature in our own docket.

Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services (PDS) Department Director, stated they need to have a recommendation from the Committee since this item is up for approval by the Council tonight.

Byrd moved that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL and Councilmembers voted on the motion (see the motion and vote below after Councilmembers and staff had further discussion).

Councilmembers and staff discussed adding things to the docket, having a work session at the first May meeting to go over a review of the State legislation that is relevant to this and see what (if any) changes they might need to make to the docket, when the Comprehensive Plan scope of work will be coming to the Council, whether it would be worth the Council looking at a list of the State legislative bills and deciding which ones they would like to commit to discussing regardless of their outcome in the State legislative session, and amending the Council's Comprehensive Plan priorities Resolution instead so that the list of items the Council wants to pursue is one place.

Byrd's motion above that the Resolution be RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Byrd, and Galloway

Nay: 1 - Elenbaas

Absent: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

Councilmembers discussed the starting time for the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Ben Elenbaas-via email 2/24/2023

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Ben Elenbaas, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

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