



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 09, 2025**

Public Hearing and Work Session

1

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair, Kelvin Barton at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Kelvin Barton, Suneeta Eisenberg, Rud Browne, Jim Hansen, Nicholas Greif, Daniel Dunne, Dominic Mocerri, Scott Van Dalen

Absent: Julie Jefferson

Suneeta Eisenberg left the meeting at 8:23p

Staff Present: Mark Personius, Lucas Clark, Lauren Templeton, Lauren Clemens, Lauren Smith, Jennifer Hayden, Sue Sullivan, and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

Department Update

Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), provided information on the topics being presented tonight and spoke on the City of Blaine's proposal being cancelled and will have Alex Wenger, City of Blaine CDS Director, speak on the reasoning during the Open Session for Public Comment.

Mr. Personius then gave a schedule update for the next few meetings:

- October 23rd: Chapter 8 - Resource Lands Public Hearing
- October 30th: Annual Code Scrub Public Hearing / Continuation of UGA Proposals: Sumas, Nooksack, Birch Bay, Columbia Valley, Cherry Point, Everson
- November 5th: Briefing and Discussion to Council Committee of the Whole on the Planning Commission-Recommended Chapter 12 – Climate.
- November 6th: Chapter 2 – Land Use / UGA Proposals: Bellingham, Ferndale. The City of Blaine UGA Proposal is tentatively planned for this meeting.

Open Session Public Comment

Alex Wenger, Director for the City of Blaine's Community Development Services (CDS), addressed the Commission about their reasons for withdrawing their proposal. He explained that the decision was made to allow additional time to coordinate with neighboring areas including Birch Bay, and to resolve certain issues that have come up. Mr. Wenger noted that the City Council has directed city staff to find a way to bring the Semiahmoo Highlands property into the Urban Growth Area (UGA). The City of Blaine will likely revise their proposal to not have a "UGA Swap" which they will be working with County staff on. Additionally, with the upcoming east Blaine de-annexation ballot measure on November 4th, it will dictate where the city goes with their UGA proposal and will wait to see the results of the ballot measure.

Lisa Guthrie, Sharman Burnham, Matt Berry, Tony Hebden, Bill Geyer, Danielle Gaughen, Doralee Booth provided public comment.



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Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Greif noted this is the second last-minute cancelation from Blaine on their UGA proposal and stated the repeated cancellations show lack of respect for the Commission and members of the public who attend the meetings to provide public comment.

Commissioner Hansen provided a notification of activities, reporting that he spoke with the Whatcom County Under-Sheriff about the capacity that the Sheriff's Department has to address additional population in the Columbia Valley. He noted they have a satellite station in the area with two dedicated deputies seven days a week.

Commissioner Browne expressed his frustration with what is going on in the City of Blaine because 11 years ago when he was on Council, discussions with Blaine took place regarding infrastructure development in the Eastern part of the city. As a councilmember, he went forward with Blaine, proposing a mechanism for funding the infrastructure, addressing the city's barrier to completing the annexation and expansion. He noted the City of Blaine failed to follow through on the opportunity and is now talking about de-annexing that part of the city and redirecting their activities elsewhere.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Timestamp: 6:30p

1 Commissioner Greif moved to approve the meeting minutes from September 25, 2025.

Commissioner Mocerri seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Eisenberg, Greif, Hansen, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Barton

(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Open Space Application

Timestamp: 6:31p

Lauren Templeton, Conservation Easement Program (CEP) Administrator, provided a brief overview of the Open Space Program application process, explaining that properties are evaluated based on public benefit criteria, including ecological value, recreation, and public access. She explained the difference between the Designated Forestland (DFL) and Open Space Farm & Agricultural Land (OSAG) programs, the Open Space Land (OSL) and Open Space Farm & Agricultural Conservation Land (OSFAC) requires the property to have public access. However; the Council may waive public access requirement for known habitat of endangered species, known archeological sites, or wetland conservation.

Ms. Templeton outlined the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs). This system considers natural resources such as streams, wetlands, scenic vistas, recreation, and educational opportunities.

The application being presented for a public hearing is for OSP2025-001-Stevens. The PBRs score is 50.87. The property is approximately 30 acres located south of Everson in Rural zoning. It contains mapped wetlands, mature forest up to over 100-year trees



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1 and a seasonal stream that runs through the property. Whatcom Land Trust has a
2 conservation easement across the majority of the property for its wetland conservation
3 values. Both Whatcom Land Trust and the property owner have requested a waiver of
4 public access to protect those resources. Staff is recommending approval of this
5 application.

6 Commissioners asked clarifying questions about the multiple parcels part of the
7 application, property tax part of the benefits for the program, and how much of the
8 property is under conservation easement currently.

9 Commissioner Greif asked about the public benefits when the property owner does not
10 want to allow public access.

11 Ms. Templeton stated that part of the public benefit are the conservation easements
12 that cover the wetland areas of the property. She noted that the owners have agreed
13 to have educational opportunities and hosting public events in a more structured
14 fashion.

15 **a) Open Space Public Hearing**

16 **Timestamp: 6:48p**

17 Otto Pointer provided public comment.

18 **b) Work Session**

19 **Timestamp: 6:49p**

20 Commission Chair Barton asked about the public access part of the application process.
21 He suggested adding some type of public access such as picnic benches.

22 The Commission continued to discussed the property taxes, conservation easements
23 and the lack of public access for the application.

24 **2Commissioner Greif moved** to deny the application for the Open Space Application
25 *OSP2025-001 – Stevens.*

26 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

27 **Amendment Commissioner Browne moved** to recommend Council deny the
28 *application unless public access is provided.*

29 **Commissioner Greif seconded.**

30 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Greif, Hansen, Mocer, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne,**
31 **Eisenberg, Barton**

32 **(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

33 **Timestamp: 7:00p**

34 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Mocer, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg,**
35 **Greif, Barton**

36 **(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

37 **Timestamp: 7:02p**



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2025 Comprehensive Plan Update – Chapter 5: Utilities

Timestamp: 7:03p

Lucas Clark, PDS Long Range Planner, provided an overview on Chapter 5: Utilities of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. He explained that “utilities” encompasses all lines and facilities used to distribute, collect, transmit, or control electric power, natural gas, petroleum, telecommunications, water and sewage. Most non-regional utilities are operated by special districts, private companies, or cities. Mr. Clark noted that utilities such as electricity, natural gas, and petroleum are inherently regional in nature and are regulated at the county, state and federal levels.

The intent of this chapter is to support utility providers in meeting their public service obligations required by state law; to ensure reliable service to existing and future customers; and minimize negative impacts on residents, infrastructure, and the environment.

c) Chapter 5: Utilities Public Hearing

Timestamp: 7:06p

Mike Kaufman provided public comment.

d) Work Session

Timestamp: 7:10p

Commissioner Mocerri asked to speak on policy 5C-10 and 5C-11 on page 5-6 and what the differences are because they seem to say the same thing.

Commissioner Greif asked to explain symmetrical service.

Mr. Clark stated that symmetrical service means upload and download speeds are the same. Oftentimes, download speeds are faster and upload speeds are slower. One of the goals of Washington State Commerce in their BEAD Act (Broadband Equity Access) is to have one gigabyte symmetrical service.

Mr. Clark answered Commissioner Mocerri’s question, stating the difference between policies 5C-10 and 5C-11, is that 5C-11 speaks to equity, whereas 5C-10 speaks to generally broadband service throughout the county.

4Commissioner Greif moved to strike 5C-10 and amend 5C-11 to say “Support equitable broadband access, affordability, and quality for all residents and businesses, with a target of 1 GBPS symmetrical service throughout the County.

Commissioner Eisenberg seconded.

The Commission was in consensus. The motion carried.

Timestamp: 7:17p

Commissioner Greif asked about 5R-3 and to remove the last three words of the policy for clarity.

5Commissioner Hansen moved to add policy 5P-7 to say – “Encourage and support the broad implementation of water use efficiency.”

Commissioner Browne seconded.



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1 **The Commission was in consensus. The motion carried.**

2 **Timestamp: 7:27p**

3 **6Commissioner Browne moved** to add 5P-8 to say *"Recognized that rural*
4 *residential development is virtually non-consumptive with water."*

5 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

6 The Commission debated the amount of truth the statement holds when it comes to
7 non-consumptive water in certain areas of the county.

8 **The motion was withdrawn.**

9 **Timestamp: 7:34p**

10 Commissioner Dunne asked about Goal 5S on page 5-19 and asked for clarification on
11 Policy 5S-2.

12 Commission Chair Barton recognized: Kaia Hayes, from WRIA-1 Planning Unit.

13 Ms. Hayes explained that the suggested goal addition came from overall discussion on
14 the chapter and the intent is to ensure that water availability and planning align with
15 the county's long-term land use vision, rather than allowing water constraints alone to
16 dictate growth patterns.

17 Commissioner Greif asked about overall cell phone services and the lack of good
18 coverage throughout the county.

19 **7Commissioner Greif moved** to add Policy 5C-12 to say *"Actively encourage and*
20 *coordinate with wireless carriers to expand and upgrade cellular voice and data*
21 *networks countywide, ensuring reliable coverage in all communities and along major*
22 *transportation corridors."*

23 **Commissioner Dunne seconded.**

24 **The Commission was in consensus. The motion carried.**

25 **Timestamp: 7:52p**

26 **8Commissioner Browne moved** to add:

27 *Policy 5S-5 - Establish economic, physical and legal feasibility of redirecting surplus*
28 *fresh water above the required minimum instream flow from the mouth of the*
29 *Nooksack to AG operations and urban growth areas that lack adequate legal water.*

30 *Policy 5S-6 - Identify potential utility corridors to install pipelines to transport surplus*
31 *fresh water above the required minimum instream flow from the mouth of the*
32 *Nooksack ensure future development does not prohibit utilizing these corridors.*

33 *Policy 5S-7 - Identify and advocate for funding to redirect surplus fresh water above*
34 *the required minimum instream flow from the mouth of the Nooksack for AG and other*
35 *uses.*

36 **Commissioner Dunne seconded.**

37 Ms. Hayes asked a clarifying question about the proposed policy additions and the
38 surplus surface water.



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Commissioner Browne clarified that the policy is for the freshwater in the Nooksack that mixes in with saltwater, at which point it becomes part of the seawater.

Mr. Personius stated in the instream flow rule for the Nooksack river, there is a reserved amount of water that the Department of Ecology has determined necessary for fish, wildlife in the river. Therefore, at certain periods of time, there is no surplus.

Mr. Personius suggested amending the language to specify "surplus above minimum instream flows".

Commissioner Browne accepted the friendly amendment.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Greif, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Barton

Nays- Hansen, Mocerri, Eisenberg

(Ayes- 5; Nays- 3; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Timestamp: 8:23p

Commissioner Dunne talked about policy 5H-2 and 5H-3.

9 Commissioner Dunne moved to pass the on to Council

Commissioner Mocerri seconded.

Commissioner Hansen called on Mike Kaufman to make a final comment.

Amendment Commissioner Greif moved to table the motion.

The Commission was in consensus. The motion carried.

Timestamp: 8:28p

10 Commissioner Hansen moved to add policy 5A-7 to say "Whatcom County should work in good faith with the PUD to implement the goals and policies contained in the utility chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Greif, Barton

(Ayes- 7; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Timestamp: 8:34p

11 Commissioner Dunne moved to pass the on to Council.

Commissioner Mocerri seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Greif, Hansen, Barton

(Ayes- 7; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Timestamp: 8:34p



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New Business

Timestamp: 8:35p

12 Commissioner Dunne moved to ask staff to evaluate the distribution of density on east and west of the road in the TREK properties proposal.

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Commissioner Dunne explained this motion is based out in Kendall, a landowner is wanting to rezone some of their properties called "TREK properties" parcels. The landowner would like to zone his 80 acres to URM 6. It is in the Paradise Valley area.

Mr. Personius reminded the Commission that the UGAs will be coming back to them for discussion on October 30th.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Greif, Hansen, Barton (Ayes- 7; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Adjournment

Timestamp: 8:39p

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

Kelvin Barton, Chair

Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary