



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
May 22, 2025**

Public Hearing and Work Session

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**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair, Kelvin Barton at 6:07p.m.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** Kelvin Barton, Rud Browne, Jim Hansen, Daniel Dunne, Dominic Mocerì

**Absent:** Scott Van Dalen, Nick Greif, Suneeta Eisenberg, Julie Jefferson

**Staff Present:** Mark Personius, Matt Aamot and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

**Department Update**

Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), provided information on the items that will be presented to the Council at their next meeting. These items include the Public Utility Code Amendments for electrical transmission lines and the continued deliberations on the Countywide Planning Policies.

Mr. Personius continued his update with preliminary discussions involving the Council and Council staff regarding joint meetings with the Commission. Staff suggested holding joint meetings in August and possibly October. In the meantime, staff will keep the Council informed by sending them Planning Commission packets to review the topics discussed at each Commission meeting. Following the Commission meeting, the Council will convene a Committee of the Whole meeting, during which there will be an agenda item to discuss the relevant chapter. The Council will provide feedback to staff, who will then present it back to the Planning Commission for review. Mr. Personius has asked Aileen Kogut-Aguon, PDS Coordinator, to create a poll to determine the Commission's availability for the joint meetings and any additional meetings.

Mr. Personius concluded his update with a recap of the public hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that took place on May 21st, along with the tentative schedule for the Commission's review of the Comprehensive Plan chapters. He mentioned the following schedule:

- June 12: Transportation Element with Public Works and a consultant from Transpo
- June 26: Climate Element with Lauren Clemens
- July 10: Potential continuation of the Climate Element discussion and a work session on proposed changes to Chapter 9: Recreation
- July 24: Chapter 4: Capital Facilities with Matt Aamot
- August: Utilities and Economic chapters

This schedule assumes that each chapter will be covered in a single session.

Commissioner Hansen requested that staff send out the chapters two weeks in advance for review, rather than a week before.

Commissioner Hansen commented about the lack of consultation with Lummi Nation other than Proforma. He is concerned that the consultants did not do a more proactive outreach for Lummi and it may be grounds for them to challenge what is being approved during the Comp Plan process.



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Mr. Personius stated that staff have followed House Bill 1717 which required the county to reach out to the tribes and they can voluntarily propose to engage in the GMA Comprehensive Plan updates as the tribes are not subject to GMA. Letters were sent out to both Tribal Chairs, asking for their engagement. Staff have engaged with the Nooksack Tribe on a draft agreement. However, staff have not formally received a response from Lummi Nation on the invitation for engagement. However, staff have been specifically engaged with Lummi Nation staff on cultural resource issues both through consultation on the countywide planning policies and the Comprehensive Plan. Staff also reached out to the Lummi Nation Tribal Chair to invite them to participate in commenting on the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan as well as reaching out to Lummi natural resources staff for comment on the Environment chapter via the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board framework.

Matt Aamot, PDS Senior Planner, presented the engagement summary from SCJ Alliance that was sent to the Planning Commission earlier this week per Commissioner Dunne's request.

**Open Session Public Comment**

Timestamp: 6:29p.m

Ander Russel from Resources, provided public comment on Population and Employment projections.

**Commissioner Comments**

Timestamp: 6:35p.m

There were no Commissioner Comments.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Timestamp: 6:35p.m

**1 Commissioner Dunne moved** to approve the meeting minutes from May 8, 2025

**Commissioner Browne seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Dunne, Hansen, Browne, Barton**

**Abstain- Mocerì**

**(Ayes-4; Nays-0; Abstain-1). The motion carried.**

**Comprehensive Plan Update - Chapter 1: Introduction and Growth Projections**

Timestamp: 6:37p.m

Matt Aamot provided information on the proposed changes to Chapter One: Introduction and Growth Projections. These changes include the GMA goals to reflect changes made by the state legislature in recent years, the population projections, historical population data, and OFM population projections that were updated at the state level for each county. The proposed changes also include employment projections, historical employment projections and inserting new projections for the 2023-2045 planning period. The projections will focus on urban growth areas (UGAs), areas outside of the UGAs and countywide total. Staff are looking for preliminary Planning Commission recommendations for Chapter One. Commissioner Dunne asked to walk through the process of the growth projections.



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**a) Public Hearing**

Timestamp: 6:46p.m

Darcy Jones from Jones Engineers provided public comment in favor of alternative two for to Chapter One: Growth Projections of the Comp Plan.

Commissioner Hansen asked Mr. Jones if he was testifying about DEIS or Chapter One.

Mr. Aamot stated that alternative two in the EIS is the same as the multi-jurisdictional resolution, which is the same as the population and employment projections in chapter one.

**b) Work Session**

Timestamp: 6:53p.m

Commissioner Dunne commented on page 1-3 Goal 1A, wanting to add the following: The following goal and policies are intended to "

**2Commissioner Dunne moved** to add the preamble to page 1-3 above Goal 1A the following: The following goal and policies are intended to... ".

**Commissioner Mocerri seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Mocerri, Barton**

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

Timestamp: 6:58p

Commissioner Dunne continued his comments with pages 1-6 and 1-7: Population Projections. He suggested adding a chart that shows the difference between net migration and natural growth projections to compare to the historical data that the chapter already has (in Figure 1).

Commissioner Browne stated that the Commission should not overlook the housing crisis and know that we need to make sure housing can be affordable.

Commissioner Dunne continued his proposed changes on page 1-12. He requested to use a different phrase or chart instead of using "culturally diverse" since the section talks about age and not skin color, religion or cultural background.

Mr. Aamot

**3Commissioner Dunne moved** to add a chart that reflects the future net migration versus natural increase net growth provided by OFM.

**Commissioner Hansen seconded.**

Commissioner Browne asked where would the projected numbers come from?

Mr. Aamot stated that that numbers would come from the projections from OFM forecasting.

Commissioner Browne responded that the numbers would still be unknown and would like a better option on how to get accurate projections for the chart.

Commissioner Mocerri asked Commissioner Dunne why it would be useful to have this chart.



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Commissioner Dunne responded that from a data standpoint, it would show where the population is coming from. It would be similar to the age band chart.

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Dunne, Hansen, Mocer, Browne, Barton**

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

Timestamp: 7:15p

**Commissioner Mocer moved** to add a similar data table to Table 6 that mirrors what the future projections will be.

**Commissioner Dunne seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Mocer, Browne, Dunne, Barton**

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

Timestamp: 7:20p

**Commissioner Dunne moved** to strike out "culturally diverse" from Demographics on page 1-12.

**Commissioner Hansen seconded.**

Commissioner Chair Barton asked Commissioner Dunne why take out that phrase.

Commissioner Dunne responded that it does not relate to the paragraph.

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Dunne, Hansen**

**Nays- Browne, Barton**

**Abstain- Mocer (Ayes- 2; Nays- 2; Abstain- 1). The motion failed.**

Timestamp: 7:25p

**Commissioner Hansen moved** to reject the population and job growth projections as presented in Chapter One, and replace them with the medium growth as presented in the OFM projections.

**Commissioner Browne seconded.**

Commissioner Hansen explained why he made the motion.

Commissioner Browne stated that there are a couple of fundamental flaws to the motion because it assumes that an acre zoned for building houses can have an acre of houses on it. Most of those acres are reduced significantly partially due to wetlands and wetland buffers.

Commissioner Dunne spoke on rejecting the motion because in his opinion the numbers should be higher than the medium.

Commissioner Hansen commented that it is concerning if the Commission is being asked to pass something that is not in the best interest of the public. He has little faith that the Consultant did the best they could to get these projections.

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen**

**Nays- Browne, Dunne, Mocer, Barton**

**(Ayes- 1; Nays- 4; Abstain- 0). The motion failed.**



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**Timestamp: 7:38p**

Commissioner Mocerri asked Mr. Aamot to explain paragraph three under the Employment section of the chapter on page 1-10.

Mr. Aamot stated that the UGA has to be consistent with the population and employment projections, and over the years, cities expressed the desire to recruit more businesses than what was historically done.

**Commissioner Hansen moved** to add "In accordance with the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S Constitution... Constitutional projections should be recognized as such" to number 6 on page 1-1.

The motion was not seconded and the Commission moved on.

Mr. Aamot stated that the section is verbatim and written word for word from the GMA.

**Commissioner Hansen moved** to add "and corridors" after wildlife habitat to number 9 on page 1-2.

The motion was not seconded.

Mr. Aamot and Mr. Personius stated that corridors are mentioned in other chapters and this is the same issue as before, as the proposed Comp Plan language is quoted word for word from the GMA.

**Commissioner Dunne moved** to preliminarily approve the proposed Chapter 1 with the suggested amendments from the Commission.

**Commissioner Mocerri seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Mocerri, Browne, Dunne, Barton**

**Nays- Hansen**

**(Ayes- 4; Nays- 1; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

**Timestamp: 8:03p**

Commissioner Browne stated his concern that there are only 5 Commissioners present out of the 9.

Staff will take the concern to legal counsel and request guidance for this.

**Adjournment**

**Timestamp: 8:05p.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

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Kelvin Barton, Chair

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Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary