



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 22, 2026**

Public Hearing and Work Session

1

1 **Call to Order**

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

4 **Roll Call**

5 **Present:** Kelvin Barton, Suneeta Eisenberg, Rud Browne, Jim Hansen, Daniel Dunne,
6 Dominic Mocerri, Scott Van Dalen,

7 Nicholas Greif arrived at: 6:37 p.m.

8 **Absent: Julie Jefferson**

9 **Staff Present:** Mark Personius, Matt Aamot, Lucas Clark, Maddie Schacht, Lauren
10 Clemens and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

11 **Department Update**

12 Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), stated that
13 tonight is the final Comprehensive Plan public hearing for the Commission before
14 moving it on to County Council. He noted that staff have regularly updated Council
15 throughout the Comp Plan process. Council will be discussing Chapter 4: Capital
16 Facilities and Chapter 5: Utilities at their next meeting. Mr. Personius finished his
17 update stating there are two Commission seats vacant as of January 31st, noting that
18 Commissioner Van Dalen has reapplied and has been approved by Council for a second
19 term.

20 **Open Session Public Comment**

21 There was no public comment.

22 **Commissioner Comments**

23 There were no Commissioner comments.

24 **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

25 **Timestamp: 6:08p**

26 **1 Commissioner Dunne moved** to approve the meeting minutes from December 4th,
27 11th, 16th and 18th, 2025.

28 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

29 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg,**
30 **Barton**

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

32 **Final Comprehensive Plan Update**

33 **Timestamp: 6:09p**

34 Matt Aamot, PDS Senior Planner, provided a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan
35 Update, including the discussion to date and the proposed changes sent to the
36 Commission regarding Appendix I (Housing Needs Analysis) and Appendix A
37 (Glossary).



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1 **a) Public Hearing**

2 **Timestamp: 6:11p**

3 Peter Frazier, Dan Tucker, Chris Secrist, Matt Lloyd, Coleman Hoyt, Brian Gass,
4 Dwayne Engelsman, Peter Condyles, Craig Zimmerman, David Parsons, Bridget Bryk,
5 Bill Geyer, and Perry Eskridge provided public comment.

6 **b) Work Session**

7 **Timestamp: 6:53p**

8 Commissioner Browne asked about where Heavy Industrial Impact (HII) is mentioned
9 in Policy 2U-9.

10 **2 Commissioner Browne moved to strike Policy 2U-9.**

11 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

12 Commissioner Browne explained his reasoning for striking out policy 2U-9, stating that
13 both HII and the Light Impact Industrial (LII) Zoning Districts are needed to support
14 affordable housing and employment growth. He emphasized the importance of a
15 broader countywide discussion on industrial zoning that considers the needs of both
16 businesses and residents, rather than focusing on a single area.

17 The Commission noted the need to provide alternatives that balance housing and
18 employment growth throughout the county without downzoning existing HII areas.

19 Commissioner Browne stated that striking out the policy now would solve the problem
20 of double land supply, and then the Commission can revisit this issue in the future.

21 Commissioner Mocerri expressed that including language in the Comprehensive Plan
22 acknowledging the need for a future discussion on industrial zoning is preferable to
23 omitting the issue entirely and removing the policy.

24 **Amendment: Commissioner Dunne moved to amend Policy 2U-9 to say:**
25 *“Coordinate with the City of Bellingham in evaluating benefits and costs of*
26 *existing or proposed industrial zoning in the Bellingham UGA and seek additional*
27 *industrial zoning sites countywide in coordination with the Whatcom County*
28 *Industrial Lands Study (July 2025).”*

29 **Commissioner Browne seconded.**

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

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

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

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

36 **Timestamp: 7:12p**

37 **3 Commissioner Mocerri moved to adjust the definition in Appendix A (Glossary) to**
38 **match the definition in Chapter 2 on Urban Community Forests to read:**



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1 "Urban and community forests include vegetated areas on lands in urban growth
2 areas. Specifically, this includes any land with trees and associated vegetation,
3 whether it's planted or naturally occurring, used or unused, and includes areas along
4 roads, utilities, and forested watersheds within populated zones. Designate urban and
5 community forests on public land greater than 5 acres with over 75% tree canopy."

6 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

7 **The motion was withdrawn.**

8 **Timestamp: 7:23p**

9 **4Commissioner Dunne moved** to remove Urban and Community Forest definition
10 from Appendix A (Glossary).

11 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

12 Commissioner Mocerri asked where the definition originated.

13 Mr. Aamot stated it came from an RCW that is unrelated to the Growth Management
14 Act (GMA). The GMA states that the county needs to designate these areas, but
15 provides no definition for the term, and does not provide direction on what to do with
16 designated areas.

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

18 **Nays- Hansen**

19 **Abstain- Mocerri**

20 **(Ayes- 6; Nays- 1; Abstain- 1). The motion carried.**

21 **Timestamp: 7:26p**

22 Commissioner Mocerri asked about the data for Appendix I (Housing Needs Analysis)
23 and the proposed amended language that was sent to the Commission regarding
24 emergency shelter beds.

25 Mr. Aamot explained that the data for the Land Capacity Analysis for emergency
26 housing beds, a new GMA requirement, was received from a couple of the cities prior
27 to the meeting. Staff is proposing to add:

28 *A land capacity analysis was conducted for each UGA to compare the total*
29 *emergency shelter beds needed in the UGA to the land capacity for such*
30 *beds. These analyses show that there is adequate land capacity to accommodate*
31 *the emergency shelter beds allocated to each UGA."*

32 Commissioner Dunne expressed his concern on adding the language before seeing the
33 land capacity analysis data.

34 Commissioner Dunne discussed the public comment from Futurewise, explaining that
35 they would appeal the Comp Plan on Agricultural (AG) lands and the lack of low-
36 income housing.

37 Commissioner Mocerri asked about Columbia Valley LII zoning in the Foothills Subarea
38 Plan in Exhibit B of the packet.



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1 Mr. Aamot stated that staff is proposing to update the Foothills Subarea plan, with
2 related rezoning the area north of Limestone Rd. in the existing Columbia Valley UGA
3 from Rural Forestry (RF) to LII, to potentially add employment opportunities for the
4 area. He added that General Commercial (GC) Zoning District would be expanded by
5 5-acres to avoid split zone parcels, and some Urban Residential 4 units per acre (UR-4)
6 would be rezoned to Urban Residential Medium density 6-units per acre (URM-6). This
7 change would align with House Bill 1220, allowing multifamily housing.

8 **5Commissioner Mocerri moved** to update the Foothills Subarea Plan map to match
9 the proposal for the Columbia Valley UGA Map 2-3, and modify Policy CVI-D, number
10 1, to read: Mitigate traffic impacts and address infrastructure/ utility/service needs
11 through the land division and development permitting process.

12 **Commissioner Browne seconded.**

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

14 **Nays- Eisenberg, Hansen**

15 **Abstain- (Ayes- 6; Nays- 2; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

16 **Timestamp: 7:37p**

17 **6Commissioner Browne moved** to approve his letter as revised and attach it to the
18 Comprehensive Plan update.

19 **Commissioner Dunne seconded.**

20 Commissioner Browne stated that if the Comprehensive Plan is approved without this
21 restriction for Bellingham and Blaine, it will cause less affordable housing, raising taxes
22 for housing by 3,000 dollars per household.

23 Chris Behee, Bellingham Long Range Planning Division Manager, clarified that the \$133
24 million funding gap identified for Bellingham came from the land capacity analysis and
25 noted that the proposed 220 market-rate units, without subsidy, would address that
26 gap. He stated that Bellingham's plan does not propose a \$3,000 per-household tax
27 increase and that such an approach would not be feasible.

28 Commissioner Mocerri expressed concern with the wording in the first paragraph of the
29 letter, specifically the phrase "rejecting the Comprehensive Plan" based on the
30 Bellingham and Blaine proposal. He stated that the language should reflect that the
31 Commission is recommending approval of the Comp Plan, with the caveat that Council
32 re-evaluates Bellingham and Blaine's proposal first.

33 **Amended language for the first paragraph:** The Whatcom County Planning
34 Commission recommends that you require the Cities of Bellingham and Blaine
35 adopt reasonable measures (as defined by the Growth Management Act) to
36 amend their plans to meet their obligations under the GMA.

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

38 **Nays- Greif, Hansen**

39 **Abstain- Eisenberg (Ayes- 5; Nays- 2; Abstain- 1). The motion carried.**

40 **Timestamp: 8:09p**



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1 **7***Commissioner Barton moved to recommend the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update*
2 *to Council with the associated findings.*

3 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

4 Commissioner Hansen stated that he opposes the motion because this plan side steps
5 the GMA and will cause sprawl. He agrees with Futurewise that there needs to be
6 changes in the UGAs.

7 Commissioner Greif expressed his gratitude to the Commission for their hard work in
8 getting through the Comp Plan, and his thoughts on the GMA and the jurisdictions
9 proposals.

10 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Eisenberg, Greif, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne,**
11 **Barton**

12 **Nays- Hansen**

13 **(Ayes- 7; Nays- 1; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

14 **Timestamp: 8:14p**

15 **8***Commissioner Mocerri moved to direct Staff after the adoption of the*
16 *Comprehensive Plan by the County Council to do a full audit of costs associated*
17 *with the Comprehensive Plan update, including staff time and consultants and*
18 *present the results to the Planning Commission.*

19 **Commissioner Dunne seconded.**

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

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

23 **Timestamp: 8:17p**

24 **Other Business**

25 **Timestamp: 8:17p**

26 Mr. Personius presented Commission Chair Barton with a plaque and certificate of
27 completion for serving 10 years on the Commission, with 6 years as Chairman.

28 **Adjournment**

29 **Timestamp: 8:20p**

30 The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

31 Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

32 WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

33

34

Chair

Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Coordinator