



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 24, 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 6:01p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Kelvin Barton, Rud Browne, Julie Jefferson, Daniel Dunne, Dominic Mocerri, Scott Van Dalen

Jim Hansen joined 6:04p

Nicholas Greif joined 6:05p

Absent: Suneeta Eisenberg

Staff Present: Mark Personius, Matt Aamot, Rob Ney, Rod Lamb and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

Department Update

Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), provided a recap on the joint County Council/Commission meeting held on Tuesday July 22nd, and provided an updated schedule for the Commission's upcoming August meetings. The next joint Council/Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 6th rather than the usual Tuesday, due to the primary election taking place. This meeting will focus on the new Chapter 12: Climate Element. A public hearing and work session on the chapter will be held on August 14th during the regular Planning Commission meeting. The August 28th meeting will focus on Chapter 7: Economic Development. Mr. Personius concluded his update by noting that Council Chair Galloway has added 30 minutes to the August 6th joint meeting agenda in order to complete the discussion on the Urban Growth Area (UGA) preferred alternatives for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Open Session Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Comments

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Timestamp: 6:11p

1 Commissioner Browne moved to approve the meeting minutes from June 26, 2025 and July 10, 2025.

Commissioner Dunne seconded.

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

Abstain- Hansen, Jefferson

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



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2025 Comp Plan Update – Chapter 4: Capital Facilities

Timestamp: 6:12p

Matt Aamot, PDS Senior Planner, provided an overview on the Chapter 4 Capital Facilities of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. This chapter includes background information on the Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, goals and policies related to County and Special Purpose District Capital facilities. Capital facilities include law enforcement, corrections, juvenile detention, emergency management, general government buildings, parks, trails and activity centers. Special Purpose District facilities include school, fire, water and sewer districts.

Staff is seeking preliminary Planning Commission recommendations on the proposed updates to Chapter 4 which include, text changes to reflect recent amendments to the GMA made by the state legislature, particularly related to climate change and resilience, green infrastructure, and impact fees. Updates to the parks section include language regarding services at activity centers, such as senior centers, as recommended by the County Parks Department. The chapter also adopts various Special Purpose District plans by reference. Since the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2016, many of these district plans have been revised, and the chapter has been updated to reference the most current versions. Additional updates will be incorporated as new plans are approved in 2025.

a) Chapter 4: Capital Facilities Public Hearing

Timestamp: 6:15p

There was no public comment.

b) Chapter 4: Capital Facilities Work Session

Timestamp: 6:16p

Commissioner Dunne asked Mr. Aamot to elaborate on appendix E and F, and how they relate to Chapter 4.

Mr. Aamot responded that appendix F relates to the chapter as a lot of the GMA provisions are in there such as, county government buildings, trails, existing and proposed facilities, and a seven-year financing plan. Appendix E, which is the 20-year Capital Facilities plan, includes not only county projects, but summary information on water, sewer, fire and school districts.

Commissioner Mocerri asked when the Commission can expect to see appendix E and F.

Mr. Aamot responded that it may be brought to the Commission in November depending on the scheduling for the meetings.

Commissioner Dunne asked about the Level of Service (LOS) in the chapter.

Rod Lamb, Whatcom County Parks Director, responded stating there are two LOS standards, one is related to developed parks, and the other is related to trails. These LOS standards have been in place since 1997. The Parks Department is going to undertake an update to the Comprehensive Park Recreation Open Space Plan in the next 18 months to review and evaluate the LOS.



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Commissioner Mocerri asked about page 4-6 Goal 4K and 4L and why there are some school and fire districts under Goal 4L and not 4K.

Commissioner Browne spoke against Goal 4K, relating to school and fire district mitigation fees and impact fees, because it makes a home unaffordable.

Commissioner Hansen called point of order, requesting that Commissioners raise their hands to be called on and not have open dialogue.

2Commissioner Browne moved to amend Goal 4K to have at the end state "notwithstanding the above, recognize the mitigation and impact fees, will only apply to new construction and will result in new homes becoming even less affordable.

Commissioner Dunne seconded.

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

Nays- Hansen, Jefferson

Abstain- Greif

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

Timestamp: 6:52

3Commissioner Greif moved to add "where feasible" after "silver standard" in Policy 4M-2.

Commissioner Mocerri seconded.

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

Abstain- Jefferson

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

Timestamp: 6:58p

Commissioner Dunne asked 4M-3.

4Commissioner Dunne moved to add the words "that are" between the words "building" and "regulated" to Policy 4M-3.

Commissioner Mocerri seconded.

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

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

Timestamp: 7:05p

5Commissioner Greif moved to move this chapter on to Council.

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

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

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

Timestamp: 7:09p



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Land Capacity Analysis and Methodologies

Timestamp: 7:11p

Andrew Oliver from Leland Consulting Group provided a presentation on the Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements related to Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) and the associated methodologies. For the LCA methodology for permanent housing and employment needs, he shared data on capacity based on zoning, including aggregated housing data by zoning classifications. The presentation included housing need projections based on draft Whatcom County allocations, broken down by income bands. Per Department of Commerce guidance, housing needs are categorized into various income levels—generally including low-income, moderate-income, and high-income—and are compared to zoning-based capacity aligned with affordability levels.

Mr. Oliver also presented the methodology for assessing land capacity for emergency housing. This methodology identifies zoned acreage where emergency housing and shelters are allowed, based on LCA worksheets, and accounts for any spacing or intensity regulations. It also includes assumptions about the types of emergency housing or shelters likely to be constructed.

These methodologies are technical in nature and will be administratively approved by the County Planning Director; no formal recommendation from the Planning Commission is required, as approval does not involve legislative action. The methodologies will be presented to the County Council prior to being finalized by the Planning Director.

c) Land Capacity Analysis and Methodologies Public Hearing

Timestamp: 7:58p

Darcy Jones from Jones Engineering, provided public comment.

Perry Eskridge from BIAWC provided public comment.

d) Land Capacity Analysis and Methodologies Work Session

Timestamp: 8:06p

Commissioners and the public raised concerns about the accuracy of the analysis, including the use of deduction factors, the treatment of critical areas and wetlands, and the potential for underestimating or overestimating the true buildable land inventory.

The discussion included the process for reviewing and updating the LCA, including the requirements for periodic monitoring and adjustments to ensure the plans remain aligned with actual growth and development trends.

The discussion highlighted the complexity and challenges involved in accurately projecting long-term land capacity and housing needs, and the importance of an iterative and transparent process to address these issues.

City of Bellingham and Ferndale planners were present and responded to questions regarding their jurisdictions.

Timestamp: 9:03p



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Adjournment

Timestamp: 9:03p

Point of order was called by Commissioner Hansen, stating the need to follow the business rules, waiting to be recognized by the Chair and not have an open dialogue.

Commissioner Hansen moved to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Jefferson seconded.

No roll call vote was conducted.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

Kelvin Barton, Chair

Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary