



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
January 23, 2025**

Public Hearing and Work Session

1

1 **Call to Order**

2 The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair, Kelvin
3 Barton at 6:31 p.m.

4 **Roll Call**

5 **Present:** Kelvin Barton, Suneeta Eisenberg, Jim Hansen, Julie Jefferson, Dominic Mocerri,
6 Scott Van Dalen, Atul Deshmane, Frank James

7 Jim Hansen arrived at 6:34p – Had connection issues throughout the night.

8 **Absent:** Stephen Jackson

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

10 **Department Update**

11 Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), gave an update on
12 the two public hearings going to Council next Tuesday night. Mr. Personius mentioned the
13 meeting he had with the city and county elected officials in Ferndale today to discuss
14 Growth Management Act (GMA) issues and Comp Plan issues. Some of those issues
15 included Urban Growth Area (UGA) development and ways the cities and county could go
16 about managing those areas. To end the department update, Mr. Personius thanked the
17 Planning Commissioners who have completed their term for their services with the county.

18 **Open Session Public Comment**

19 **Timestamp:** 6:40p

20 David Stalheim provided public comment about the Population and Employment
21 Projections that are going to Council next week.

22 **Commissioner Comments**

23 Commissioner Deshmane reflected on his time with the Planning Commission as his final
24 term comes to an end.

25 Commissioner Frank James spoke on the public comment with the Population Employment
26 projection from David Stalheim. He then reflected on the reasons why he joined the
27 Commission, as his term is ending as well.

28 Commissioner James expressed his opinions on what is happening in Whatcom County
29 and how the Commissioners have a responsibility in doing what is right for the County,
30 the tribes and the environment.

31 **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

32 **Timestamp:**

33 **1 Commissioner Deshmane moved** to approve the meeting minutes from December 12,
34 2024

35 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

36 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Eisenberg, Jefferson, James, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Deshmane,**
37 **Barton**

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



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1 **Amending Countywide Planning Policies**

2 **Timestamp: 6:55p**

3 Matt Aamot, PDS Senior Planner, provided the staff report regarding amending the
4 Countywide Planning Policies. The Countywide Planning Policies were originally adopted by
5 County Council in 1993 and last amended in 2021. The Growth Management Act (GMA)
6 was amended in 2022 and 2023 to require that Countywide Planning Policies must
7 address Tribal Cultural Resources and climate change and resiliency.

8 Mr. Aamot presented the proposed changes to the Countywide Planning Policies to
9 address the new requirements and otherwise update the policies. He stated that Lummi
10 Nation submitted proposed changes to the policies relating to the Tribal Cultural
11 Resources that the City County Planner Group endorsed with minor modifications and
12 would like to incorporate those changes into the proposal. Mr. Aamot mentioned there
13 were several other comment letters that came in recently and recommended that the
14 Planning Commission ask the City County Planner Group to make recommendations on
15 the public comment letters and present them at the February 27th meeting.

16 **a) Countywide Planning Policies Public Hearing**

17 **Timestamp: 7:00p**

18 Dan Dunne, Bill Geyer and Perry Eskridge provided public comment.

19 **b) Countywide Planning Policies Work Session**

20 **Timestamp: 7:07p**

21 Commissioner Deshmane asked staff to address Perry Eskridge's comment on the
22 examples of the UGAs in Section D item 2.

23 Mr. Aamot responded that the Geneva and Hillsdale area are not examples of the UGA,
24 but are special cases. They are in the Bellingham UGA, but also in the watershed.

25 Commissioner Mocerri asked if there is a reason why there needs to be specific language
26 on the development and if this section can be taken out.

27 Chris Behee, Bellingham City Planner, stated that Bellingham would not object to
28 removing that from the policy.

29 **2Commissioner Mocerri moved** to leave the first sentence of Section D item 2, and
30 *delete the rest of the paragraph.*

31 **Commissioner James seconded.**

32 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Deshmane, Jefferson, James, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Eisenberg,**
33 **Barton**

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

35 **Timestamp: 7:18p**

36 **3Commissioner James moved** to adopt the Lummi Nation's proposal of the Tribal
37 *Cultural Resources and accept the modification provided by staff.*

38 **Commissioner Jefferson seconded.**

39 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Jefferson, James, Mocerri, Hansen, Eisenberg,**
40 **Deshmane, Barton**

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



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1 Commissioner Mocerri asked about the language and changes proposed on page C-11
2 number 12 on the zoning changes that occurred in the UGA around the cities.

3 Mr. Aamot responded that the changes that are made in the policy, reflect what was
4 already changed 10-15 years ago in those areas. It does not affect the current zoning for
5 those UGAs, but further reductions in density has come up in discussion with the cities.

6 Commissioner Deshmane spoke on the proposed changes requested by Lummi Nation
7 regarding page C-10 section 8, and asked if Mr. Aamot can look at the public comment
8 and try to find consistent language that will make the policy logically clear.

9 Commissioner Deshmane also asked about page C-20 on Impact Fees – L2, why is it just
10 school districts that trigger the impact fees.

11 Mr. Behee stated that in policy 1, under L, it relates to impact fees levied by cities and
12 counties, and policy 2 is related specifically to the school district and the school impact
13 fees because they set those under their own capital improvement plan. Whereas the cities
14 and county control parks and transportation impact fees.

15 *Timestamp: 7:30p*

16 **4Commissioner Deshmane moved** to ask staff to revisit L-1 and L-2 with the city
17 planners and bring back to the Planning Commission.

18 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

19 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Deshmane, Eisenberg, Jefferson, James, Mocerri, Van Dalen,**
20 **Barton**

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

22 *Timestamp: 7:35p*

23 Commissioner Mocerri spoke on the language in section I: Economic Development and
24 Employment on page C-17 number 9. He stated that in the second sentence of that policy,
25 there is no mention of mineral resource industries being supported in a sustainable
26 manner like agricultural forestry and fishing are.

27 Commissioner Hansen stated that he agrees that mineral resources need to be exploited
28 appropriately, but they are not exactly sustainable industries because they do not
29 regenerate.

30 Commissioner Eisenberg suggested using environmental justice when talking about
31 regenerative manner because it is different than sustainable, knowing that this is part of
32 an extractive economy and still based off of fossil fuels.

33 **5Commissioner Mocerri moved** to include mineral resources in the second sentence of
34 number nine in section I.

35 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

36 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Jefferson, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Deshmane, Barton**

37 **Abstain- James, Eisenberg (Ayes- 6; Nays- 0; Abstain- 2). The motion carried.**

38 *Timestamp: 7:45*

39 Commissioner Deshmane asked why section I, number 8-C of the document is needed,
40 and if it can be taken out.



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- 1 Mr. Aamot stated that it was originally put in to encourage certain types of economic
2 development and endorsed by County Council.
- 3 Commissioner Deshmane asked if staff can take this section back to the city planners to
4 come up with better language that better reflects our economic development priorities as
5 identified by City and County Councils.
- 6 Commissioner Deshmane spoke about page C-22 Section N: Water Quality and Quantity,
7 number 5. He stated that the Watershed Management Board coordinates the activities of
8 all of our local governments and tribal nations and tribes as it relates to protecting the
9 watershed. It is a resource for bringing state and federal money into the community to
10 protect the watershed. However, the Water Management Board is not equipped with the
11 correct tools to deal with these kinds of water nexus with land use problems.
- 12 Commissioner James stated that the policy was intended to avoid litigation as a solution
13 because litigation is time consuming and expensive. It was a reasonable effort to try and
14 do that, but has not worked and will not work.
- 15 Commissioner Mocerri asked for clarification about Section T, on page C-25, number 3
16 regarding greenhouse gas emissions, and what exactly the policy is stating.
- 17 Lauren Clemens, Special Projects Climate Manager Public Works, responded that the
18 requirement is based on population. Certain jurisdictions that are adopting the countywide
19 planning policies are not required to have any greenhouse gas reduction policies in their
20 comprehensive plan.
- 21 Commissioner Deshmane stated that Futurewise's recommendations seemed reasonable.
22 The other public comments will be discussed with the city planners and brought back to
23 the Commission on February 27th.
- 24 Commissioner Chair Barton requested that on Section J: Transportation Facilities and
25 Strategies, number 8 on Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA), to have a parenthesis saying
26 Whatcom Transportation Authority to define WTA.
- 27 Mr. Aamot stated that the wording is not accurate and there should be a change on the
28 language to the Whatcom Transportation Authority.
- 29 Commissioner Van Dalen will not be available for the Annual Business meeting on
30 February 13th.

31 **Adjournment**

32 **Timestamp: 8:11p**

33 The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.
34 Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

35 WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

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Handwritten signature of Kelvin Barton in black ink.

Kelvin Barton, Chair

Handwritten signature of Aileen Kogut-Aguon in black ink.

Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary