

August 14, 2020  
Whatcom County Council  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105  
Bellingham, WA 98225

### Cherry Point Amendments – Planning Commission Minority Opinion

County Council Members

I want to first thank the community, staff and commission members for the work that has been put into improving the Comprehensive Plan Amendments. I believe we came a long way in compromise from what was originally proposed and what effected industry sees as workable regulations. That said, I still cannot support the amendments. Changes in our county regulations and land use policy should show obvious benefit to our community. And while the intentions of environmental improvement and job security at Cherry Point are good, these amendments by their nature will have the opposite effect.

The proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are a substantial shift from historical priorities on land use and will undoubtedly have impacts on the current and future health of our county. These impacts deserve thorough review.

**Environmental:** Global greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced by limiting local production of fossil fuels. Unchanged demand will likely shift production to facilities with lower efficiency and environmental standards, increasing global emissions. GHG reduction can only be accomplished through a reduction in consumption of fossil fuels. If the goal of these amendments is to reduce GHG emissions, a full environmental review to quantify these benefits should be expected.

**Economic:** Planning goals stated by the Growth Management Act require both environmental protection as well as economic development – specifically to promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses. Regulatory burden and uncertainty of permit approval increases risk when evaluating investment prospects and threatens the long-term sustainability of existing industry. Projects offering economic opportunity to our county will likely pass without us ever knowing, including renewable fuel developments.

**Legality:** The current amendments guarantee legal challenge, costing taxpayers while taking time and resources away from staff.

Areas of concern include:

Violation of the Takings Clause – 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment US Constitution – WA State Constitution

Equal Protections Clause – US Constitution – WA State Constitution

Due Process – Pertaining to property rights – US Constitution – WA State Constitution

Commerce Clause – US Constitution

Gives inappropriate authority to the county, attempting to enforce State and Federal Laws

Conflicts with our own Planning Goals as required by the GMA

I strongly recommend the County Council postpone the passage of the Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan and Code Amendments until a sufficient Environmental Impact Study, Economic Impact Study, and Legal Liability Review have been evaluated.

These actions will come at a cost to our community while the benefit is unknown. Encouraging these industries to thrive locally, under their already strict environmental standards, is best not only for our county's economy but for the global environment.



Jon Maberry