



## WHATCOM COUNTY

### WASHINGTON

# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MAY 14, 2026

## Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair Dunne at 6:00 p.m.

## Roll Call

**Present:** Matthew Berry, Rud Browne, Daniel Dunne, Dominic Mocerri, Jeremy Thompson, Scott Van Dalen

Selena Knoblauch arrived at 6:02 p.m.

Jim Hansen arrived at 6:19 p.m.

**Staff Present:** Mark Personius, Maddie Schacht, Matt Aamot, Nicholas Smith, Craig Ostrom and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

## Department Update

Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), gave an update on the Comprehensive Plan and what County Council will be reviewing:

- Tuesday 5/19: Chapter 2, Chapter 8, Chapter 10, and Chapter 12. The afternoon session will be on follow-ups for any of the chapters they have preliminarily approved at prior meetings, i.e chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

Mr. Personius finished his update, speaking on the countywide budget constraints and the 2027-2028 biennium budget preparations for all departments, noting the budget reduction scenarios exercise of 7-10% that departments have to submit as part of the biennium budget preparation. Proposed department budgets are due to the Executive's Office July 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Open Session Public Comment

Bill Geyer, Brian Gass and Dwayne Engelsman provided public comment.

## Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Mocerri commented on the scrivener's error for the City of Bellingham's urban growth area (UGA) acres count in the mapping.

Staff corrected the error and will present the updated map to County Council.

## Approval of Meeting Minutes

Timestamp: 00:14:28

**Motion 1. Commissioner Browne moved** to approve the meeting minutes from April 23, 2026.

**Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Berry, Browne, Dunne, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen**

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

Timestamp: 00:15:02

## Final Periodic Update Related Amendments

Timestamp: 00:15:03

### Comprehensive Plan – Appendix K: Adequate Provisions Checklist for Housing Availability

Maddie Schacht, PDS Senior Planner, provided a presentation on the new proposed Appendix K: Adequate Provisions Checklist for the Comprehensive Plan.

#### **a. Comprehensive Plan Appendix K - Public Hearing**

Timestamp: 00:22:49

Bill Geyer, Brian Gass and Dwayne Engelsman provided public testimony.

#### **b. Comprehensive Plan Appendix K - Work Session**

Timestamp: 00:32:31

### Moderate Density, Low-Rise, and Mid-Rise Housing Barrier Review Checklist

Commissioner Hansen asked Mr. Geyer clarifying questions regarding his testimony.

#### **A. Development Regulations**

The Commission discussed the development regulations and the barriers that staff have presented within the checklist of Appendix K.

**Motion 2. Commission Chair Dunne moved** to strike the first sentence and the word "additionally" of "Action Needed to Address Barrier, for Barrier#1: Unclear Development Regulations.

**Commissioner Knoblauch seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry**

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

Timestamp: 00:44:41

**Motion 3. Commissioner Browne moved** to add to the end of Barrier#1: Unclear Development Regulations – "Why or Why Not": "and/or interpreted differently by different parties."

**Commissioner Berry seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne**

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

Timestamp: 00:53:01

**Motion 4. Commissioner Browne moved** to add after "checklist" under "Action Needed" for Barrier #1: "requiring urgent and ongoing extensive consultation with the development community for their assistance in Code review and update."

**Commissioner Thompson seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

**Nays- Hansen, Knoblauch**

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

Timestamp: 01:01:07

Commissioner Mocerri asked clarifying questions for Barrier#2, regarding the new provisions that Washington State Legislature has changed for Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs).

**Motion 5. Commissioner Mocerì moved** to discuss Exhibit A from "Unfinished Business" concurrent with the Appendix K work session.

**Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerì, Thompson**

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

Timestamp: 01:10:44

The Commission discussed Exhibit A: Adequate Provisions.

**Motion 6. Commissioner Mocerì moved** to add the following to Exhibit A - Adequate Provisions Proposed Code Amendments:

- *Hinote's Corner, Pole & Guide, Custer, Lake Samish and Sudden Valley after "zoning districts" under Chapter 20.32 Residential Rural (RR) District.*
- *"and duplexes, and in the Hinote's Corner, Custer, Lake Samish and Sudden Valley "Rural Community" Comprehensive Plan Designation," after "dwelling" under Chapter 20.61 Small Town Commercial (STC) District.*

**Commissioner Knoblauch seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Knoblauch, Mocerì, Van Dalen**

**Nays- Berry, Dunne, Thompson**

**Abstain- Browne, Hansen**

**(Ayes- 3; Nays- 3; Abstain- 2). The motion failed.**

Timestamp: 01:32:52

## B. Process Obstacles

The Commission asked clarifying questions on the process obstacles and the barriers that can affect housing production.

**Motion 7. Commission Chair Dunne moved** to change the answer from "No" to "Yes" in Barrier #3: Lack of Clear and Accessible Information about Processes and Fees, under "Is this Barrier likely to Affect Housing Production".

**Commissioner Browne seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerì, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry**

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

Timestamp: 01:55:12

**Motion 8. Commission Chair Dunne moved** to add the following to Barrier #3:

Under Question: Why or Why Not – *In spite of these efforts, there is still room for improvement in communication on permit process and fees.*

Under Action Needed to Address Barrier – *Increase outreach to stakeholder groups and the public, and staff train to increase efficiency and consistency in staff communication to customers.*

**Commissioner Browne seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerì, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry**

**Absent- Browne**

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

Timestamp: 02:04:25

Commission Chair Dunne asked clarifying questions about Barrier #4: Permit Fees & Utility Connection Fees.

**Motion 9. Commissioner Browne moved** to add the following bullet points to Barrier #4 under "Action Needed to Address Barrier":

- Increase in permit fees could win community support, if it results in faster and more reliable permit issuance.
- The County could also create a permit fee exemption or reduction for qualified affordable housing developments.

**Commissioner Knoblauch seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

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

Timestamp: 02:16:12

**Motion 10. Commissioner Browne moved** to add the following bullet point to "Action Needed to Address Barrier" for Process Obstacles - Barrier #3:

- Publish policy manual(s) that clearly define how the Code is to be interpreted by all parties similar to the CFRs and the WAC.

**Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

**Nays- Knoblauch, Thompson, Hansen**

**Abstain- Mocerri**

**(Ayes- 4; Nays- 3; Abstain- 1). The motion failed.**

Timestamp: 02:28:03

**Motion 11. Commissioner Knoblauch moved** to add the following bullet point to Barrier #5: Processing Timelines and Staffing Challenges, under "Action Needed to Address Barrier":

- Increase in permit fees could win community support, if it results in faster and more reliable permit issuance.

**Commissioner Mocerri seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Mocerri, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne, Hansen. Knoblauch**

**Absent- Thompson**

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

Timestamp: 02:32:33

## C. Limited Land Availability and Environmental Constraints

**Motion 12. Commissioner Knoblauch moved** to add the following bullet point under "Action Needed to Address Barrier" for Barrier# 1 - Lack of Large Parcels for Infill Development:

- Addition of 4610 Lincoln Road in the Birch Bay Urban Growth Area.

**Commissioner Berry seconded.**

Commissioner Hansen explained that the original zoning and UGA conversations from prior meetings on the Comp Plan led to the decision for the Lincoln Road property.

**The motion was withdrawn.**

Timestamp: 02:36:04

## **Zoning Map Amendment Exhibit 2: Lummi Island "Mineral Resource Special District" Overlay Removal**

Mrs. Schacht provided a presentation on the proposed zoning map amendment for Lummi Island "Mineral Resource Special District" overlay removal.

### **c. Zoning Map Amendment Exhibit 2 – Public Hearing**

Timestamp: 02:42:11

There was no provided public testimony.

### **d. Zoning Map Amendment Exhibit 2 - Work Session**

Timestamp: 02:42:11

**Motion 13. Commissioner Van Dalen moved** to approve the zoning map amendment for Exhibit 2 as proposed by staff.

**Commissioner Knoblauch seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri**

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

Timestamp: 02:43:33

## **Comprehensive Plan Appendix K – Continued Work Session**

### **Supplementary Barrier Review Checklist for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) & Emergency Housing**

#### **A. Development Regulations**

The Commission asked clarifying questions about PSH and Emergency Housing and the barriers for them.

**Motion 14. Commission Chair Dunne moved** to add language that clarifies that the Whatcom County Code does not appear to include any development standards for Permanent Supportive Housing that differ from those for other housing types, and Emergency Housing is considered a "Temporary Homeless Facility" and regulated under WCC 20.17.

The language proposed is for Barriers 2,3,4 and 6 under "Why or Why Not?".

**Commissioner Browne seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

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

Timestamp: 02:58:20

### **Moderate Density, Low-Rise, and Mid-Rise Housing Barrier Review Checklist**

#### **C. Limited Land Availability and Environmental Constraints**

**Motion 15. Commissioner Browne moved** to add the following to Barrier #2: Environmental Constraints under "Why or Why not":

*"Mitigation often requires conversion of large area of nearby farm land, pushing future housing further away from urban areas.*

**Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

**Abstain- Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri**

**(Ayes- 5; Nays- 0; Abstain- 3). The motion carried.**

Timestamp: 03:06:35

**Motion 16. Commissioner Browne moved** to add a bullet point to Barrier#2: *Environmental Constraints under "Why or Why Not":*

- *Public mitigation banks are difficult to establish in less than 10 years in Washington State, compared to 2 years elsewhere e.g State of Virginia.*

**Commissioner Berry seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne**

**Abstain- Hansen**

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

Timestamp: 03:16:28

#### Accessory Dwelling Unit Barrier Review Checklist

##### B. Process Obstacles

**Motion 17. Commission Chair Dunne moved** to add the following bullet points to Barrier #1: *Lack of Clear and Accessible Information about Processes:*

*Why or Why Not*

- *In spite of these efforts, there is still room for improvement in communication on permit processes and fees.*

*Action Needed to Address Barrier*

- *Increase outreach to stakeholder groups and the public, and train staff to increase efficiency and consistency in staff communication to customers.*

**Commissioner Knoblauch seconded.**

**The Commission was in agreement. The motion carried.**

**(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0).**

Timestamp: 03:22:46

**Motion 18. Commissioner Van Dalen moved** to approve the checklists for Appendix K as amended.

**Commissioner Hansen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry**

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

Timestamp: 03:25:41p

**Motion 19. Commissioner Browne moved** to approve the zoning code

**Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Hansen, Knoblauch, Mocerri, Thompson, Van Dalen, Berry**

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

Timestamp: 03:27:07

**Unfinished Business**

Timestamp: 03:27:08

Periodic Update Related Housing & Concurrent Code Amendments – Continuation of Exhibit F: Essential Public Facilities

The Commission decided to move the unfinished business to their May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**New Business**

Timestamp: 03:27:21

There was no new business to discuss

**Adjournment**

Timestamp: 03:29:00

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

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Daniel Dunne, Chair

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Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Coordinator

