

PROPOSED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
INTRODUCTION DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO WHATCOM COUNTY CODE TITLES 2 (ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL) AND 3 (REVENUE AND FINANCE) TO AMEND THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVING ON THE WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, CLEANING UP THE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE CODE, AND ABOLISHING THE APPEALS BOARD**

**WHEREAS**, the Wildlife Advisory Committee would like to be able to have a representative of a state or federal wildlife agency as one of their members, but WCC 2.118.040 precludes such a representative if they don't live and vote in Whatcom County; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Agricultural Advisory Committee wishes to clean up its establishing code; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee would like to have as members representatives of the forestry industry and a conservation easement-holding entity, but WCC 3.25A.060 doesn't require this; and;

**WHEREAS**, the Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee would like to allow members to participate in the Conservation Easement Program as long as they recuse themselves from voting if they have ownership interest in the land, but WCC 3.25A.060.A.1 does not allow this; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Appeals Board had not met in over 8 years, having had no appeals, and Whatcom County has been assigning most administrative appeals to the Hearing Examiner in the last decade;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that:

**Section 1.** Amendments to the Whatcom County Code are hereby adopted as shown in Exhibit A.

**Section 2.** Staff is authorized to work with Code Publishing to correct and update any cross-references made ineffective by these amendments.

**Section 3.** Adjudication of invalidity of any of the sections, clauses, or provisions of this Ordinance shall not affect or impair the validity of the Ordinance as a whole or any part thereof other than the part so declared to be invalid.

ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

APPROVED as to form:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

( ) Approved      ( ) Denied

\_\_\_\_\_  
Satpal Sidhu, Executive

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Exhibit A: Proposed Amendments to Certain Administrative Functions

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## 1) Amending the Qualifications for being Appointed to the Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC)

### Title 2 ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

#### Chapter 2.118 Wildlife Advisory Committee

(...)

##### 2.118.040 Qualifications.

To qualify for County Council appointment to ~~fill any vacancy on a board, committee, or commission~~the Wildlife Advisory Committee, a person shall be a qualified registered voter in Whatcom County ~~or~~ and be a member or employee of the agency or group ~~he or she is~~they are appointed to represent.

(...)

## 2) Cleaning up the Agricultural Advisory Committee code

#### Chapter 2.34 Agricultural Advisory Committee

##### 2.34.010 Established.

There is hereby established the Whatcom County ~~a~~Agricultural ~~a~~Advisory ~~e~~Committee (AAC).

##### 2.34.020 Purpose.

The ~~a~~Agricultural ~~a~~Advisory ~~e~~Committee provides review and recommendations to the Whatcom County ~~e~~Council on issues that affect agriculture in Whatcom County. The AAC also provides a forum for farmers and others interested in enhancing and promoting the long-term viability of Whatcom County agriculture.

##### 2.34.030 Function.

To report directly to the ~~e~~County ~~e~~Council or other appropriate advisory boards, commissions, and committees as necessary to carry out the following functions:

- A. Review and provide recommendations on zoning, comprehensive plan, subarea plans, regulations, ~~and~~ annexation issues, and land use of proposals ~~that which~~ directly affect lands or agricultural activities in or adjacent to the ~~a~~Agricultural district, the ~~a~~Agricultural ~~p~~Protection ~~o~~Overlay ~~d~~District, or other lands of agricultural significance; and.
- B. Assist the County and make recommendations in the effort to establish, promote, and implement a comprehensive agricultural protection/-preservation program; and.
- C. Analyze and develop recommendations that will assist the ~~e~~County in addressing other issues ~~that which~~ affect agriculture at the county, regional, state, and federal levels; and
- D. ~~Assist, u~~Upon request of the ~~D~~Director of ~~p~~Planning and ~~d~~Development ~~s~~Services, assist that department by providing review and comment on comprehensive planning and zoning related

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issues in or adjacent to the ~~a~~Agricultural district or the ~~a~~Agricultural ~~p~~Protection ~~e~~Overlay ~~d~~District, or other lands of agricultural significance.

**2.34.040 Membership – Term of office.**

A. The committee shall consist of no more than 13 voting members, consisting of one member from the Whatcom ~~C~~County ~~e~~Conservation ~~d~~District board, one representative from Whatcom Family Farmers, one representative from the agricultural processing industry, one citizen representing consumers of agricultural products, and one citizen with expertise in agricultural programs. The remaining ~~6~~8 voting positions are to include agricultural producers representing both large- and small-scale producers of the various agricultural commodities produced in Whatcom County. A quorum shall consist of at least half of the appointed voting members.

In addition to the voting members, a representative of Washington State University Extension, Natural Resources ~~C~~Conservation Service, Whatcom ~~C~~County ~~e~~Conservation ~~d~~District staff, and agriculturally involved youth (such as Future Farmers of America) youth, and Whatcom County Department of Planning and Development Services will may serve on the committee in an *ex officio* capacity.

**Commented [CES1]:** Don't need this, as a PDS staff member is already assigned to the committee per 2.34.060.

B. The ~~e~~CCounty ~~e~~Executive will appoint the voting citizen committee members with final confirmation by the ~~e~~CCounty ~~e~~Council. ~~C~~itizen ~~V~~oting member terms will be four years.

**2.34.050 Organization – Meetings.**

Meetings of the committee shall be open and accessible to the public and shall be subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. The committee shall determine its own meeting schedule, but shall meet at least four times per year. At every meeting, the committee will schedule an open session to take public comment on agricultural issues. Written records of meetings, resolutions, findings, and recommendations shall be kept, and such records shall be public. The committee shall adopt its own rules and procedures for ~~the conducting of~~ business. The committee shall elect a chairperson from among its members who shall preside at its meetings.

**2.34.060 Committee staffing.**

The Whatcom County ~~D~~epartment of ~~p~~Planning and ~~d~~Development ~~s~~ervices ~~d~~epartment shall provide staffing for the committee. The committee is authorized to request from the ~~e~~Executive's office information from administrative departments as necessary.

**3) Amending the Composition of the Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee (CEPOC)**

**Title 3 REVENUE AND FINANCE**

**Chapter 3.25A Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program**

**3.25A.060 Conservation easement program oversight committee established – Powers and duties.**

A. **Establishment.** The CEP oversight committee is hereby established, as follows:

1. The committee shall consist of ~~nine seven~~ members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by County Council. Each member shall be a resident in and of Whatcom County. The committee shall be comprised of ~~two three~~ farmers, ~~one farmer or forestry representative~~, one individual representing farm-supporting businesses, one individual possessing real estate

experience, one citizen (nonfarmer) from the unincorporated county, ~~and one citizen~~ (nonfarmer) from an incorporated city, one citizen with expertise in agricultural programs, and one conservation easement-holding entity. Any member who has an ownership interest in the land submitted for participation in the program shall recuse themselves from voting. ~~No members may have an ownership interest in any of the lands submitted for purchase pursuant to this chapter.~~

(...)

D. **Organization – Meetings.** Meetings of the committee shall be open and accessible to the public and shall be subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. The committee shall determine its own meeting schedule but shall meet at least annually. A public comment period will be provided at each meeting. Written records of meetings, decisions, findings, and recommendations shall be kept and such records shall be public. The committee shall adopt its own rules and procedures for the conduct of business. The committee shall elect a chairperson from among its members who shall preside at its meetings. A quorum shall consist of ~~four~~ five members present and the committee shall operate on a “majority rule” basis.

**Commented [CES2]:** The CEPOC would like to update this as the member could recuse themselves from voting on land with any ownership interest, and it may be beneficial to have a past participant on the committee.

#### 4) Abolishing the Appeals Board

### TITLE 2 ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

#### Chapter 2.11 Hearing Examiner

##### 2.11.210 Final Decisions.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 22.05 WCC, the hearing examiner shall conduct open record hearings and prepare a record thereof, and make a final decision upon the following matters:

...

A. Appeals from any order, permits, decisions or final determinations made by an administrative official or committee in the administration of this Title, WCC Title 15, ~~except for building and fire code requirements,~~ WCC Title 16, Environment, WCC Title 17, Flood Damage Prevention, WCC Title 20, Zoning, WCC Title 21, Land Division Regulations, WCC Title 22, Project Permit Procedures, WCC Title 23, Shoreline Management Program, or WCC Title 24, Health Code.

##### 2.11.220 Rules and regulations.

The Hearing Examiner shall have the power to prescribe rules and regulations for the conduct of hearings before him or her, subject to approval by the County Council; and also, to issue summons for and compel the appearance of witnesses, to administer oath, and preserve order. The opportunity of cross-examination of witnesses shall be afforded all ~~interested parties~~ with standing or their counsel in accordance with the rules of the hearing examiner.

**Commented [CES3]:** Pursuant to previous amendments, where we have changed this term and defined it, per the P.A.'s recommendation.

**Chapter 2.80 County Appeals Board**

Sections:

- ~~2.80.010 Purpose.~~
- ~~2.80.020 Board established — Appointment of members.~~
- ~~2.80.030 Regulations regarding compensation and interest in subject matter.~~
- ~~2.80.040 Fees.~~
- ~~2.80.050 Cooperation of county officials.~~
- ~~2.80.060 Powers designated — Appellate function.~~
- ~~2.80.070 Record and findings on appeal.~~
- ~~2.80.080 Scope of review.~~
- ~~2.80.090 Finality of board decision — Reconsideration.~~
- ~~2.80.100 Appeal of board decision.~~
- ~~2.80.110 Quorum.~~
- ~~2.80.120 Emergency hearings.~~
- ~~2.80.130 Records — Notice of meetings and hearings.~~
- ~~2.80.140 IBC adopted.~~

~~2.80.010 Purpose.~~

~~The purpose of this chapter is to establish a single board of appeals to be known as the county appeals board with the authority, duties and responsibilities to function in the capacity of the board of appeals as set forth in the currently adopted editions of the International Building Code and related codes as adopted by the county, specifically Appendix B of the IBC entitled "BOARD OF APPEALS," attached to the ordinance codified in this chapter.~~

~~2.80.020 Board Established — Appointment of Members.~~

~~The board shall be established as provided for in Addendum A (Appendix B, Board of Appeals). Whatcom County may appoint board members simultaneously or staggered as per Addendum A (Appendix B, Board of Appeals). Whatcom County may choose to substitute a lay person in place of the electrical engineer or contractor.~~

~~2.80.030 Regulations Regarding Compensation and Interest in Subject Matter.~~

~~Members shall not receive compensation from the county for their services as a member for the board; provided, that if the board, by majority vote, convenes a special board meeting at a location within Whatcom County other than that established by board rules, the members of the board shall be reimbursed for travel expenses at the usual county per-mile travel expense rate computed at twice the distance from the board member's place of residence to the special board meeting location. A member, the member's firm, or any agent or representative of the member shall not be precluded from receiving compensation from the county for services rendered outside his/her duties as a board member; provided, that any member having an interest or who is contemplating acquiring an interest in any particular transaction, contract or project must abstain from any participation in the deliberations of the board regarding said subject matter; and provided further, that in any event a board member shall abstain from any deliberation upon a given subject if a disinterested person, having been apprised of the totality of a board member's personal interest in a matter being acted upon, whether financial or otherwise, would be reasonably justified in thinking that partiality may exist.~~

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~~2.80.040 Fees.~~

~~Fees may be charged in accordance with the currently adopted Unified Fee Schedule. If a specific fee is not specified then the current hourly rate may be utilized to cover some of the cost of the appeal.~~

~~2.80.050 Cooperation of County Officials.~~

~~The board may request and shall receive, so far as may be necessary in the discharge of its duties, the assistance and cooperation of the county.~~

~~2.80.060 Powers Designated — Appellate Function.~~

~~The board shall have the power and jurisdiction to receive and rule on appeals from any administrative decision concerning the currently adopted International Building Code and related codes.~~

~~Any person aggrieved by a ruling made pursuant to the administration of the above listed codes and ordinances may obtain review thereof by filing an appeal within 20 days of the date of the administrative decision. The appeal shall be initiated by submitting a written notice of appeal to the clerk of the board. Notice of appeal shall be on a form provided by the clerk of the board and shall include at a minimum the following information: name, address and telephone number of appellant, location of the job or building site, decision being appealed, and applicable code or ordinance. Answer to the appeal shall be made by the official whose decision is being appealed within 20 days of receipt of the appeal notice.~~

~~2.80.070 Record and Findings on Appeal.~~

~~All hearings on appeals before the board shall be open to the public. Each final decision of the board shall be in writing and shall include findings and conclusions, based upon the record, to support the decision.~~

~~2.80.080 Scope of Review.~~

~~In exercising the powers granted herein, the board may, in conformity with the applicable code or ordinance, reverse or affirm, wholly or in part, or may modify the order, requirement, decision, or determination appealed from, and may make such order, requirement, decision, or determination as should be made, and to that end, shall have all powers for the officer from whom the appeal is being taken, insofar as the decision on the particular issue is concerned, and in making its determination the board may hear any pertinent facts bearing on the case.~~

~~2.80.090 Finality of Board Decision — Reconsideration.~~

- ~~A. The decision of the board shall be deemed final, except that the board may reconsider any decision made by it upon a timely motion in writing submitted by a party to appeal within seven days of the date of mailing of the board's decision.~~
- ~~B. Reconsideration may be granted to all or any of the parties and on all or part of the issues, when such issues are clearly and fairly separable and distinct, on the motion of the party aggrieved for any one of the following causes materially affecting the substantial rights of such parties:
  - ~~1. Irregularity in the proceedings of the board, by which such party was prevented from having a fair hearing;~~
  - ~~2. Misconduct of a prevailing party; or~~
  - ~~3. Newly discovered evidence, material for the party making the application which he could not with reasonable diligence have discovered and produced at the hearing.~~~~
- ~~C. When a motion for reconsideration is served and filed, the board shall determine whether the motion shall be heard and, if so, schedule the time and nature of the hearing. The board shall notify~~

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~~the parties whether the motion or motions shall be heard on oral argument or submitted on briefs, and if on brief, shall fix the time within which the brief shall be served and filed.~~

~~D.—The decision of the board, upon reconsideration, shall be made in writing. In the event that the board modifies its previous decision or deems that new findings and conclusions of law are necessary as a part of the decision then the board shall proceed to have new findings and conclusions drafted.~~

~~E.—Should a party aggrieved by a decision of the board desire to seek judicial review of the board's decision, as hereinafter provided, it shall not be deemed necessary for the party to first seek a reconsideration of the board's decision in order to satisfy the doctrine of the exhaustion of administrative remedies.~~

~~2.80.100 Appeal of Board Decision.~~

~~Any party to an appeal who is aggrieved by a final decision of the board may appeal said decision by filing the appropriate pleadings in the superior court of Whatcom County within 30 days of notification of the board's decision in accordance with RCW 34.04.130. For purposes of measuring the 30 day period, the period shall begin from the date of mailing such decision.~~

~~Provided, in the event a timely motion for reconsideration is filed pursuant to WCC 2.80.090, the time period for appeal shall be 10 days from the date on which the motion is decided. The 10 day period in such instance shall begin from the date of mailing such decision; provided, that such period may not expire less than 30 days from the time of the original decision.~~

~~2.80.110 Quorum.~~

~~A majority of the board shall constitute a quorum. A quorum of the board shall be necessary to hear all appeals. A quorum shall constitute the membership at any given time.~~

~~2.80.120 Emergency Hearings.~~

~~In the event that it appears that the public health, safety or welfare may be significantly affected by a delay in scheduling a hearing or rendering a decision, the chairperson of the board shall be empowered to convene the board for purposes of hearing said appeal, or rendering such decision, at such earlier date, time, and location as he or she shall deem appropriate.~~

~~Notice of such hearing shall be given to the parties at the earliest point in time possible and shall also be posted in the county courthouse.~~

~~2.80.130 Records—Notice of Meetings and Hearings.~~

~~A.—Notice shall be given prior to any hearing on an appeal to all parties to the appeal by placement of the notice in the mail at least 10 days prior to the date of hearing, except as hereinbefore provided.~~

~~B.—Notice shall also be posted in the county courthouse of any and all hearings and meetings at least 10 days in advance of such hearings or meetings except as hereinbefore provided.~~

~~C.—The board shall maintain records and minutes of all meetings, hearings, and of any actions it may take. Such records shall be kept in a file open to the public in the office of the building official by such person as he may delegate, and for such time period as may be required by law.~~

~~D.—The director of planning and development shall designate a clerk of the board.~~

~~2.80.140 IBC Adopted.~~

~~The currently adopted IBC with the current appendix chapter on the board of appeals (Appendix B, attached to the ordinance codified in this chapter) is hereby adopted along with these provisions except those that remain in effect.~~