



## Memorandum

April 22, 2019

TO: The Honorable Jack Louws, Whatcom County Executive  
The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner *MA*

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director *MP*

RE: Draft Public Participation Plan

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The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties to develop public participation programs for comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments. The Whatcom County Council approved the 2018 Public Participation Plan last May, after review by the Planning Commission. The County is now updating this Plan.

The Public Participation Plan identifies statutory requirements (GMA provisions) and lists docketed comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments that have been initiated for further review by the County Council.

The Plan classifies proposed comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments as level 1, 2 or 3 projects for determining the public participation approach. The process for each level is summarized below:

**Level 1** – Requires a staff report, notice in the newspaper, posting the proposal on the website, and sending it to the County’s e-mail list. It also requires two public hearings, one before the Planning Commission and one before the County Council, prior to final Council action.

**Level 2** – Requires all Level 1 processes, plus developing alternatives (when appropriate) and review by and advisory committee, agency, county department, or City.

**Level 3** – Requires all Level 2 processes, plus a town hall meeting.

Proposed changes from last year’s Public Participation Plan include:

1. Inserting Shoreline Program Update under Statutory Requirements – State law requires the Shoreline Management Program update to be completed by June 2020. The County is commencing the process to update the Shoreline Program.

Therefore, it is being added to the Public Participation Program as a Level 3 project.

2. Inserting New Docketed Amendments - Inserting the new comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments that the County Council initiated for review in 2019 (Resolution 2019-015).
3. Removing Amendments - Deleting amendments that were previously initiated but have completed the review process or were withdrawn.

The draft Public Participation Plan was posted on the County website on March 29, 2019. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was published in the Bellingham Herald on March 29, 2019. A link to the draft Plan and notice of the Planning Commission hearing were sent to the people and agencies on the County's e-mail list on April 1, 2019.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing and issued their recommendations on April 11, 2019. The Commission recommended approval of the Public Participation Plan, with one modification to the staff draft:

- Change the *Wind Energy System Amendments* (PLN2018-00008) from a Level 1 to a Level 2 project (see pages 4-3 and 4-4). As mentioned above, Level 2 includes developing alternatives (when appropriate) and review by an advisory committee, agency, county department, or the appropriate City.

Thank you for your review and consideration of the proposal. We look forward to discussing it with you.