

AGENDA

Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Planning and Development Services – Northwest Annex

5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Central Conference Room

or

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85943818935?pwd=K2Y0Y2VBRUlPvKkE4WTQvZXRmNytSdz09>

Passcode: cepoc

Friday, February 23, 2024

8:30 – 10:00 AM

- 1. Welcome, announcements, public comments, & agenda review (10 minutes)**
- 2. Approval of previous meeting minutes (5 minutes)**
- 3. Updates since previous meeting (5 minutes)**
- 4. Discussion items/business (60 minutes)**
 - Introduce New Committee Members
 - Motion to appoint Chair and Vice Chair
 - Motion to approve removal letter
 - Annual Review and 2024 Workplan
 - 2023 Annual Review
 - 2024 Workplan Review
 - Business Rules Review
 - Approval of Applications
- 5. Public comments (5 minutes)**
- 6. Next meeting (5 minutes)**
 - March 22nd, 8:30-10:00 AM- Online and In-Person Option
 - Future agenda items
 - Business Rules Approval
 - Grant Submittal Schedule

Included in the meeting packet (or provided at the meeting):

- January Meeting Minutes

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are asked to contact the meeting facilitator at least 4 business days in advance. Please contact meeting facilitator, Lauren Templeton, at 360-778-5956 or ltemplet@whatcomcounty.us.

Determination of a Quorum/ Welcome

We have a Quorum for the meeting starting at 8:55.

Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.

Approval of Minutes – September

Burr moved to approve the meeting minutes. Paul seconded. **The motion passed with Jen, Paul, Sean, and Burr in favor.**

Updates Since Previous Meeting

Lauren provided an update on the status of the new CEP position.

Discussion Items/BusinessCEPOC Membership Application Review

Lauren provided an update on the three applications for the new CEPOC membership positions. Dave Kershner applied for the real-estate position, Alison Moon applied for a farmer position, and Trevor Gearhart applied for a farmer position. Dave Kershner has a background in easement acquisitions and grant writing, Alison Moon is a real estate agent and a farmer, and Trevor Gearhart is a farmer and works for the Whatcom Conservation District. The committee supports recommending all three applications to the County Executive for approval.

Lauren said we will need to approve the letter to remove Heather Mackay-Brown from the committee and then advertise her position to be filled. Lauren also provided an update that the updated code amendments for the two new positions should be approved at the February 6th, 2024 Council Meeting. The committee decided to wait until the February CEPOC meeting to approve the letter for removal, so Lauren can send a letter to Heather to notify of the removal.

Review of Properties

Lauren provided a review of the Jacoby property and requested approval to purchase the Jacoby Agricultural Easement. Burr asked about the parcel boundary and Lauren said the Lot of Record should be completed this week to show the formal boundaries. Paul asked if the northern area of the agricultural parcel is forested. Lauren said the RCO grant requires 80 percent of the property to be for agricultural use, but the remaining can be used for other compatible uses. Lauren said we will combine the forestry and agricultural parcels under one easement. **Burr moved to approve the**

purchase of the Jacoby Easement. Paul seconded. The motion passed with Jen, Paul, Sean, and Burr in favor.

Lauren provided an overview of the three new applicants and requested approval from the Committee to move forward with the applicants. The applicants include one agriculture and two forestry properties. The agricultural property has a powerline easement on the property. Lauren said NRCS does not allow properties with powerline easements so we would need to pursue RCO funding. Burr asked if the powerline easement would limit development potential and asked for a property with an easement corridor. Jen asked for a map showing the surrounding area. Paul asked if the property could cluster their development. Jen said having water shares available makes the property more appealing for development. The committee recommends waiting to approve the application until February to determine the limitations of the powerline easement and cluster potential.

Lauren provides an overview of two forestry properties owned by Sanfi Acres. Jen asked for clarification on the easement cost. Paul asked if the applicant may be able to partially donate development rights. Lauren said she is looking into additional forestry properties to see if applying for the Forestry Legacy grant would be plausible. Jen said the cost per acre for the development rights is less than the average, Jen said we should pursue the properties but cannot rely on only RCO funding. **Burr moved to approve to pursue Sanfi Acres properties for easements. Jen seconded. The motion passed with Jen, Paul, Sean, and Burr in favor.**

Outreach Plan

Lauren provided an overview of the draft 2024 Outreach Plan for the Conservation Easement Program. Burr said direct marketing with larger landowners is a productive strategy, but we should also increase outreach for educational purposes. Paul supported that broader community outreach is still important to educate the general public about the program. Lauren said she is trying to present to the farm bureau and attend the WID meetings regularly. Burr asked if we have metrics on the website and Lauren said she will follow up at the next meeting. The committee discussed the importance of broader outreach to address common misconceptions. Burr recommended reviewing the Outreach Plan as a standing agenda item to track the progress, successes, and failures of the outreach. Jen recommended presenting at the individual brokerage meetings.

Paul thanks Jen and Sean for their work on the committee. Jen and Sean said they are excited about the future of the committee and to have an additional staff person joining the program. Jen asked who would like to be the new chair of the committee. Burr recommended Paul and Paul accepted. Paul and Burr said they will get the new members up to speed. The committee decided to wait until the February 2024 meeting to vote on the chair position.

Paul asked about the business rules and Open Meetings Act Training. Lauren said we will plan to review the business rules at the next meeting. Lauren recommended an annual review and work plan for the new year to present at the next meeting.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Future Agenda Items

- Introducing New Committee Members
 - Appointing Chair and Vice Chair
- Overview of the CEP
 - Rating Criteria
 - Appraisals
- Annual Review and 2024 Workplan
- Approval of Current Applicants
- Approval to Remove Incorporated Non-Farmer Position

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, February 23, 2024, 8:30-10:00 AM. This will be a hybrid meeting with an in-person and remote option.

Meeting adjourned at 10:02 AM.