

WHATCOM COUNTY
Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097
360-778-5900, TTY 800-833-6384
360-778-5901 Fax



Mark Personius, AICP
Director

Agricultural Advisory Committee **Meeting**

LOCATION

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom (details below) and
Northwest Annex Conference Room
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226**

Date: November 13, 2024

Time: 2:00-4:00 P.M. Pacific Time PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Whatcom County PDS is inviting you to a scheduled in person or Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86432152429?pwd=matGxIV4BjnL6vS8DMoQDxVMShkReJ.1>

Meeting ID: 864 3215 2429

Passcode: 000000

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,86432152429#,,,,*000000# US (Tacoma)

Dial by your location

• +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

WHATCOM COUNTY

Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097
360-778-5900, TTY 800-833-6384
360-778-5901 Fax



Mark Personius, AICP
Director

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

for
November 13, 2024

2:00-4:00 P.M.

1. Roll Call & Introductions (5 min)
 - Determination of Quorum
2. Agenda Review & Adjustments (5 min)
3. Open Public Session (5 min)
4. Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (5 min)
 - September 11, 2024 & October 9, 2024
5. Election of 2024-2025 Chair and Vice-Chair (10 min)
6. Presentation on Agricultural Conservation Programs in Whatcom & Skagit (65 min)
 - Skagit - [Farmland Legacy Program](#)
 - Whatcom - [Conservation Easement Program](#)
7. Q&A for Subcommittees (5 min)
 - Comp Plan Coordination Sub-Committee – no updates
 - Ag Strategic Plan & Rural Land Study Sub-Committee
8. Staff & Member Updates (10 min)
 - Comp Plan Consultant Draft & County Biennium Budget
9. New Business (5 min)
10. Action Items & Next Agenda (5 min)
11. Adjournment

Attachments:

- Draft minutes for AAC Meetings on 9/11/24 & 10/9/24
- AAC Business Rules

Individuals who require special assistance to participate in the meetings are asked to contact AAC staff at least 96 hours in advance at: dstranik@whatcomcounty.us, 360-778-5911.

**Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
September 11, 2024**

Start Time:	2:00 p.m.
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Zoom & at Whatcom County Planning & Development

Meeting Highlights
There were 17 people in attendance (Voting members: 9 of 10, Staff members: 2, Ex-Officio: 3 Members of the public: 3).

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Chapman, Alan (chair)	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kubalek, Roger (vice chair)	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
McDermott, Matthew	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Harron, Elli	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welch, Chantel	Ag Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Likkel, Fred	Whatcom Family Farmers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pehl, Clay	Consumer of Ag Products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hawley, Roger	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Steele, Eliza	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Del Giorgio, Isaiah	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	
VACANT	Ag Producer	
VACANT	Ag Processing	

Quorum Present	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
-----------------------	--

Attendees – Ex-Official/Contributing	Affiliation	Present
Corina Cheever	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Benedict, Chris	WSU Extension	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hall, Alex	NRCS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hallberg, Brooklyn	FFA Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Attendees - Staff	Present
Dakota Stranik, PDS Alex Harris, PDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Others Present
Kim Hallberg Steven Harrell Brandy Reed

Zoom Recording:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/iHWPO9YEN2LMcI_IJ2wpBaX1nLKydp6OujKxCkK3nrUQvDDOFRgEPhPcUskl4dOA.7LNNqr9SnWm2j1t4

1- Roll call and introductions - starting at 00:00:30

WCC 2.34.040 establishes that "a quorum shall consist of at least half of the appointed voting members." A quorum was established with 9 of 10 appointed voting members present.

2- Agenda Review & Adjustments - starting at 00:01:40

The agenda was adopted without any changes. Roger K motioned, Elli seconded, no objections.

3- Open Public Session - starting at 00:02:23

Alex Harris introduced himself as new outreach staff for the Conservation Easement Program (CEP), which works to preserve farmland in Whatcom County, a shared goal with the AAC. More information on CEP can be found here:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/573/Conservation-Easement-Program>

4- Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – starting at 00:04:16

Two sets of minutes were reviewed for prior meetings on May 8, 2024 and July 17, 2024. Fred motioned approval and Elli seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

5- Report of Subcommittee Activities - starting at 00:05:15**a. VSP, Strategic Plan, Rural Land Study, & Ag Planner Subcommittee**

This meeting was unable to meet due to scheduling conflicts.

b. Comp Plan Coordination Subcommittee

Elli gave a brief review of communications that have been had with other advisory committees. A written summary of these communications was also included in the agenda packet. The Climate Impact Advisory Committee has provided a number of recommended additions to the AAC comments on the comp plan (from 2/21/24 AAC meeting). Their comments will be circulated for discussion at the next AAC meeting. Other committees that have engaged in the conversation so far are the Housing Advisory Committee, Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee, Business & Commerce Advisory Committee, Food System Committee, Forestry Advisory Committee, Drayton/Portage Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee, and the Surface Mining Advisory Committee. According to Elli, many groups supported the concept of avoiding expansion onto prime ag soils if possible. This could merit more discussion and clarification around the Rural Study Areas. Roger suggested completing a summary document as well as revised AAC Comp Plan recommendations and submitting to the County Comp Plan Consultant. Elli agreed to help with this effort.

Alan commented on the difference between a Comp Plan and an implementation plan, and the need for the AAC to clarify where effort would be best focused. The idea was discussed around building a clear list of desired actions and then having regular engagement with Council and/or the Executive in order to build awareness and support for those actions. These actions could be better clarified in an updated Ag Strategic Plan, but it is important that a plan be more than just a conceptual document. One example is that water insecurity is potentially holding back forward movement on a number of agricultural initiatives. How can the AAC engage with finding solutions that might simultaneously

address water access and parcelization of ag lands? How can we better paint the picture of what is at stake? How to build genuine interest and engagement between agricultural and non-agricultural communities? This includes building interest within communities outside of ag, but also encouraging those within agriculture to be open to that engagement. Fred suggested the idea of a farm tour, specifically including some of the larger operations.

Alan recommended reviewing the Council meetings from 9/10/24 regarding county funding constraints and also a discussion on the Conservation Easement Program.

6- Staff & Member Updates – starting at 00:48:35

Dakota went over an informal brainstormed list of possible action items that the committee might consider focusing on moving forward. These actions might be less conceptual and also within the influence of Whatcom County PDS, Council, and the Executive. These possible actions included:

- Clarify a stance on VSP & inform County Council
- Provide advisory guidance for CPAL
- Address Ongoing Agriculture limitations
- Develop documents to support hiring of an Ag Planner
- Address barriers to improved meat processing infrastructure
- Engage with issues regarding Riparian Buffer incentives

Further discussion was had around VSP and the need for programs and policies that support the viability of farm operations. Corina mentioned that Sustainable Farms & Fields funding (through SCC) has the potential to fund farm machinery.

Ideas for future presentations to the AAC to help clarify a path forward include:

- Joint presentation of Skagit's Farmland Legacy Program and Whatcom's CEP
- Friesla and/or others (WSDA?) engaged with issues surrounding local meat processing, and if/how beef cattle numbers are increasing.
- Ag Planners working for other counties (Snohomish, Pierce, Thurston, King, etc.)
- Perspective from Ag realtors and/or farm loan offers

The recently released Whatcom CD Annual Report for 2023 was mentioned as an example of a very clear and approachable document for communicating goals and progress, and could potentially serve as a model for an updated Ag Strategic Plan.

Fred mentioned conflicts between smaller ag and larger ag or different types of ag – for example helicopter applications adjacent to livestock operations, or wedding venues and agritourism adjacent to manure application, etc. These issues may be increasing as changes continue in Whatcom County.

Dakota asked for feedback from the group on potential CPAL outreach materials in development.

Matt provided some feedback on the issue of local meat processing starting at 1:59:27. The mobile unit for North Cascades Meat Cooperative may have been problematic from an

efficiency and profitability perspective. A survey of current Puget Sound meat processing operations as well as the number of local animal units needing that service would be prudent. It took King County about 10 years to get a new meat processing facility up and running.

Fred mentioned the closure of the Cargill grain mill in Ferndale and the concerns this may bring up if a future flood were to impact EPL in Sumas. It could create a very dire situation for livestock operations needing access to feed.

7- New business

There was no new business

8- Action items and next agenda

This item was not discussed

9- Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m. The next meeting will be scheduled on Wednesday, October 9th from 2pm to 4pm. The meeting will be held as a hybrid between Zoom and in person at Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (5280 Northwest Drive).

DRAFT

**Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
October 9, 2024**

Start Time:	2:00 p.m.
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Zoom & at Whatcom County Planning & Development

Meeting Highlights
There were 10 people in attendance (Voting members: 6 of 10, Staff members: 1, Ex-Officio: 2 Members of the public: 1).

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Chapman, Alan (chair)	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kubalek, Roger (vice chair)	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
McDermott, Matthew	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harron, Elli	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welch, Chantel	Ag Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Likkel, Fred	Whatcom Family Farmers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pehl, Clay	Consumer of Ag Products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hawley, Roger	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Steele, Eliza	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Del Giorgio, Isaiah	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	
VACANT	Ag Producer	
VACANT	Ag Processing	

Quorum Present	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
-----------------------	--

Attendees – Ex-Official/Contributing	Affiliation	Present
Corina Cheever	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Benedict, Chris	WSU Extension	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hall, Alex	NRCS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hallberg, Brooklyn	FFA Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Attendees - Staff	Present
Dakota Stranik, PDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Others Present
Steven Harrell

Zoom Recording: See Whatcom County Agenda Center

1- Roll call and introductions

WCC 2.34.040 establishes that “a quorum shall consist of at least half of the appointed voting members.” A quorum was established with 6 of 10 appointed voting members present. However, due to some uncertainty regarding which section of code (WCC 2.03.100 or WCC 2.34.040) or AAC Business Rules take precedence, the meeting was conducted as if a quorum were not present. 5 members were present to begin, and 6 members were present as of 2:41pm.

2- Agenda Review & Adjustments

The agenda was loosely followed due to uncertainty on quorum.

3- Open Public Session

There were no comments for Open Public Session, though Steven Harrell spoke later in the meeting.

4- Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Previous meeting minutes for September 11, 2024 were not approved due to uncertainty on quorum.

5- Election of 2024-2025 Chair & Vice-Chair

An election was not held due to uncertainty on quorum.

6- Report of Subcommittee Activities

Subcommittee #1: Comprehensive Plan Update (Alan, Roger, Elli)

This group has not moved forward in the last month due to an injury. However, a summary of their work so far is attached in the agenda. Alan suggested that further work may not be possible before a draft is received from the consultant. He also stated that the AAC should be prepared to clearly state AAC priorities and how they can be accommodated with other priorities in the County.

- Steven Harrell (CIAC) asked about Comp Plan vs Ag Strategic Plan and how to find commonalities between advisory committees, specifically the AAC & the Climate Committee. More review and comment by the CIAC of the comments that the AAC provided to the consultant may be helpful. A statement of overlap and common goals would be useful for advocacy. The CIAC has had a number of productive conversations (4x 2 hours) with the housing committee, and that process could be mimicked with the AAC. "Joint recommendations" may not be the correct term, but rather a "statement of agreement" could be the goal. There will be a presentation regarding collaborations with the Housing Committee at the next CIAC meeting on October 17th & the CIAC will be holding a vote on the resulting document. This could be a model for AAC/CIAC overlap.

Subcommittee #2: Ag Strategic Plan (Fred, Chatel, Eliza, Clay)

This group has met once so far. They determined that they will first focus on the Ag Strategic Plan rather than VSP and Ag Planner concepts. Some areas that were discussed at the first meeting include:

- Perspectives from large and small scale farms were considered and while these groups are different, many of the issues impacting them overlap.
- Discussion was had on what ag land is most at risk (ag zone vs rural zone and reviewing the Rural Land Study). Determining what land is most worth preserving.
- Land values & sales are of concern. Ag land as an investment for venture capitalists is a concern for affordability.
- The term "farmland preservation" may not align with all farmer perspectives.
- Regulations can leave farmers feeling "nickel and dimed" and ultimately result in farms closing. How to address this?
- How to align various ag groups (CEP, WFF, Farm Bureau, AFT, etc.)?

Questions arose during the meeting regarding why the existing plan has not been more fully implemented and why resources (staff and funding) have not been allocated. Who is responsible for implementing the Ag Strategic Plan? A lack of results diminishes the ability of the AAC to maintain engagement. With limited county funds and staff, current focus could be directed towards building a case and clear process for attaining staff/funding, finding a grant, or working with a consultant to help create an ag planner position. If an ag planner were to be hired, where would they be located? Natural Resources?

7- Discussion on Local Meat Processing

Some discussion was had around if there is a need for more support for local meat processing in Whatcom County, especially a USDA processing facility. Producers with experience in the area were not present, so discussion was limited. Chantel joined the call at the beginning of the conversation and suggested hearing from somebody at WSDA or the Good Meat Project, or others. Reece Lodor at Friesla (in Everson) may be available to speak on the topic at a later date, either to the full AAC or to a subcommittee.

Information on the economic need would be useful, determining if there is enough demand in Whatcom County to justify more support for more facilities. Lynden Meats & Ten Mile Meats do custom exempt processing for beef and pork, and Widnor Farms & Osprey Hill Farm do WSDA poultry processing. DelFox in Stanwood is initiating USDA processing, and another small operation may exist in Mt Vernon. Implications for cattle operations around water use and adjudication may be worth discussing as well. There could be a subcommittee assigned to engage with this issue.

8- Review of AAC Business Rules and Procedures

The AAC Business Rules were last updated in 2018 and may be out of date in a number of areas. The bylaws could be updated to reflect the description of quorum in WCC 2.34.040 to avoid future confusion. An update could also clarify that agendas are sent out via email rather than via post. Fred is willing to look through the document and make some suggested revisions. This can be an item of business at the next meeting, with member comments compiled into a draft document to be voted on.

9- Staff & Member Updates

Fred updated the group on the recent announcement of the Cargill feed facility closing in Ferndale. Whatcom Farm Circle is coming up and needs volunteers, and Whatcom Family Farmers will host an adjudication event on October 22. Adjudication claim forms are being anticipated for mailing in January.

10- New Business

There was no new business

11- Action items and next agenda

This item was not discussed

12- Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting will be scheduled on Wednesday, November 13th from 2pm to 4pm. The meeting will be held as a hybrid between Zoom and in person at Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (5280 Northwest Drive).

DRAFT

BUSINESS RULES AND PROCEDURES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

The Whatcom County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC), being formed by the County Council pursuant to Resolution 2001-036, adopted July 24, 2001, and as revised by Resolution 2009-002, adopted January 27, 2009, does hereby adopt the following rules and procedures for the transaction of its business:

I. NAME

The official name is the "Whatcom County Agricultural Advisory Committee."

2. AUTHORITY

The committee was appointed by Resolution 2001-036 on July 24, 2001.

3. PURPOSE

The AAC shall make recommendations to the County Council on agricultural issues of importance to conserving, maintaining and enhancing the County's agricultural resource base and agricultural products industry. These issues will include but not be limited to:

1. Zoning of agricultural lands,
2. Implementation of Title 20 and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan,
3. Regulation and taxes impacting the agricultural sector,
4. The county's efforts to establish, promote and implement a comprehensive agricultural protection/preservation program, and
5. Any other agricultural issues as requested by the County Council and/or consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

4. OFFICERS - ELECTION

The AAC shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson at the first fall meeting on or after October 1st. These officers are elected for terms of one year with no term limits.

In the event of a vacancy in the office of chairperson, the vice-chairperson automatically becomes the chairperson. A vacancy occurring in the office of vice-chairperson is filled by election of a replacement to serve for the un-expired portion of the term. A vacancy in an office automatically occurs upon the third consecutive unexcused absence of an officer from the regular meetings, unless otherwise agreed to by the majority of the committee membership.

5. OFFICER DUTIES

The chairperson has the responsibility of presiding at meetings of the AAC, placing items on the agenda, calling special meetings, canceling meetings, excusing members for valid reasons from attendance at AAC meetings and shall be the spokesperson for the committee.

The vice-chairperson assumes the responsibilities of the chairperson in his/her absence.

6. MEETINGS

Meetings will be at a time and location determined by the chairperson in consultation with the members. Meetings will normally be suspended May through September to accommodate farmer members.

Special meetings may be called by a majority vote of the members at a regular meeting. Special meetings may also be called by order of the chairperson upon giving written notice to other members at least 24 hours before the meeting. The written notice must state the time, place and business to be transacted. Final action can not be taken on any item that is not included on the agenda.

All meetings shall be open to the public.

7. ATTENDANCE

The chairperson, upon the fourth consecutive unexcused absence of any member from the regular meetings, shall bring forward the issue to the full AAC to consider a recommendation to the County Executive for removal or replacement of that member. In the event of regular recurring absences any member can bring the matter to the committee for discussion.

8. QUORUM – DECISION MAKING

A majority of currently appointed positions (one more than half) is required for a quorum to conduct regular business. Members may be counted as present when calling in to committee meetings.

Meetings of the Committee will be conducted using the latest version of Robert's Rules of Order, as modified by these business rules. Decision-making will endeavor to be by consensus with the positions of each member having been heard, respected, and seriously considered.

A simple majority of the voting members present, either in person or on the phone, shall prevail.

Any committee member or committee members may file for the record a minority opinion. Such minority opinion shall include the specific issue, proposed code language, or policy which is opposed and a rationale for the minority opinion. When possible, preferred alternative language or options should be included in the minority report. Members supporting the minority report shall be listed in the minority report.

9. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The regular order of business is as follows:

- (a) Roll call
- (b) Determination of Quorum
- (c) Approval or modification of previous meeting summary
- (d) Open Session for the public to speak on agricultural issues
- (e) Staff reports or agency presentations
- (f) AAC discussion, deliberations and decision-making
- (g) Adjournment

10. OPEN SESSION FOR THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGRICULTURE ISSUES

All meetings are to be open to the public and shall include time for the public to speak on Agricultural issues. The Chairperson or the committee, by consensus, may limit speakers to five (5) minutes per person per meeting to make their points.

11. REPORTING TO THE WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

- a. The AAC shall forward any proposed amendments or recommendations to the Whatcom County Code, deemed necessary to realize the purpose of the AAC or to implement the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, to the County Council for consideration.

- b. A member may be chosen to represent the AAC in front of the County Council or a Council Committee regarding a particular matter. No member shall represent the committee without being duly authorized by the committee.
- c. The Chair (or Vice-Chair) will sign the report forwarded to the County Council to reflect the decision of the committee.
- d. Any AAC member may address the County Council on any issue relating to agriculture in Whatcom County. The member must state clearly if he/she is speaking on behalf of the AAC or in another capacity.

12. MEETING SUMMARIES AND RECORDS

Meeting summaries will be maintained as per (WCC 2.34.050). Meeting summaries shall be approved by the AAC and signed by the chairperson at the next meeting. Upon approval, the meeting summaries will be posted on the County's web site and forwarded to the County Council and other interested parties for their information.

13. NOTICE - AGENDA

Copies of the agenda will be placed in the mail to AAC members at least one week prior to the next meeting.

14. STAFF

The Planning & Development Services Department will provide staffing for the Agricultural Advisory Committee (2.34.060).

15. AMENDMENT

These rules may be amended by a majority vote of the AAC, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been placed in the mail or delivered to the members at least one week in advance.

LAST REVISED ON THE 12th of February, 2018

Larry Davis

Date