



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
March 28th, 2024**

Public Hearing and Work Session

1

1 **Call to Order**

2 The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair,
3 Kelvin Barton at 6:31 p.m.

4 **Roll Call**

5 **Present:** Kelvin Barton, Daniel Dahlquist, Atul Deshmane, Jim Hansen, Frank James,
6 Dominic Mocerri, Scott Van Dalen

7 Stephen Jackson arrived at 6:38p via zoom.

8 **Absent:**, Julie Jefferson

9 **Staff Present:** Steve Roberge, Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Priscilla Drewry, Kelly
10 Chamberlain

11 **Department Update**

12 Steve Roberge, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS),
13 provided information on agenda items be going to Council on April 9th. Mr. Roberge
14 also mentioned items scheduled for Planning Commission within the next couple of
15 months including, Public Participation Plan, High Impact Industrial Zones and Climate
16 Impact Program. He concluded his update with PDS new staff updates.

17 **Open Session Public Comment**

18 Dave Widner provided public comment and answered questions from the
19 Commissioners.

20 Lynn Moser provided public comment

21 **Commissioner Comments**

22 There was no Commissioner Comments

23 **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

24 **Timestamp:** 6:51p

25 **1 Commissioner Frank James moved** to approve the meeting minutes from
26 *February 22, 2024.*

27 **Commissioner Dominic Mocerri seconded.**

28 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-** Deshmane, Hansen, Jackson, James, Mocerri, Van Dalen,
29 **Dahlquist, Barton**

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

31 **2023 Open Space Applications**

32 **Timestamp:** 6:53p

33 Priscilla Drewry, former Open Space Program Administrator, provided information
34 about the Open Space Program and presented the current Open Space application to
35 be recommended for approval or denial to Whatcom County Council. Only one
36 application was processed in 2023 and the application does not meet the threshold to



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1 be recommended for approval by PDS staff. The application presented requests a
2 reclassification of 19.4 acres as Open Space, Farm and Agricultural Conservation Land
3 from Open Space, Farm and Agriculture.

4 Commission Chair Barton asked whether or not the access road to the property was
5 private or a public access road. Ms. Drewry responded that the road is private and as
6 part of the applicant's Public Benefit Rating (PBR) score, they received points for
7 access to the parcel but did not score as high as a public road.

8 Commissioner Mocerri asked what would happen if the property is not reclassified.
9 Ms. Drewry explained the property would no longer be part of the program and the
10 owners would owe back taxes for all the years the property was included.

11 Commissioner Hansen asked if the property was reclassified now, and then the owners
12 decide to reclassify and develop the land into five acre lots, what would the tax penalty
13 be for that. Ms. Drewry responded the property owners would owe approximately
14 \$1,000 per acre in back taxes for the past seven years.

15 Commissioner Deshmane asked to explore the issue of the water footprint and water
16 rights, and the impacts this property would have if it was switched to an open space
17 designation.

18 Commissioner Mocerri asked if the private road were changed to public access how that
19 would impact the neighboring homes around the property.

20 Commissioner James asked about the PBR scoring system and if the application had
21 earned a high enough score to be recommended for approval. He stated that based on
22 the information provided, the property does not qualify for Open Space approval
23 recommendation and, especially as it would impact the neighboring properties, he
24 argued that the Commissioners should not break from staff recommendation.

25 Commissioner Hansen noted that if the property were denied reclassification into the
26 Open Space Program, it is possible multiple homes could be built there instead which
27 would provide much less environmental conservation and be similarly if not more
28 impactful to the neighboring properties.

29 **Public Hearing and Work Session Regarding Open Space Applications**

30 **Timestamp: 7:25p**

31 There was no public comment.

32 **Open Space Application Work Session**

33 **Timestamp: 7:25p**

34 **2Commissioner James moved** to recommend the reclassification of the Open Space
35 application be denied to council.

36 **Commissioner Jackson seconded.**

37 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Jackson, James, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Dahlquist, Barton**

38 **Nays- Hansen**

39 **Abstain- Deshmane**

40 **(Ayes-6; Nays-1; Abstain-1). The motion carried.**



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1 **Timestamp: 7:23**

2 The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

3 Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

4 WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

5 

6 Kelvin Barton, Chair



Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary