

**Agricultural Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary  
April 10, 2024**

Start Time:	3:00 p.m.
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Zoom & at Whatcom County Planning & Development

Meeting Highlights
There were 15 people in attendance (Voting members: 6 of 9, Staff members: 2, Ex-Officio: 3 Members of the public: 4).

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Chapman, Alan	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
McDermott, Matthew	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kubalek, Roger	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Singh, Gurjit	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harron, Elli	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welch, Chantel	Ag Programs	<input 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"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Quorum Present</b>	<b>YES</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
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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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lauren Templeton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others Present
Alex Harris (ReSources)
Brandy Reed (WCD)
Kim Hallberg

**Zoom Recording:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/crDoCpUBAVNkUTQy3wOnSk7kT8H\\_OxGaLGSi4SzTLQtU4zna1m\\_6Ni6eXho3ZYykJdvF0ALPOnXlslD-](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/crDoCpUBAVNkUTQy3wOnSk7kT8H_OxGaLGSi4SzTLQtU4zna1m_6Ni6eXho3ZYykJdvF0ALPOnXlslD-)



**6- Discussion of Topics for Future Presentations** - starting at 01:32:08

Alan suggested a future discussion on the Pros & Cons of VSP, possibly with representatives from Thurston County & others as a comparison. Another topic suggested was further review of the Rural Study Areas as well as the different approaches taken around farmland preservation by British Columbia and also Skagit County. Sarah Stoner facilitates Skagit County's [Farmland Legacy program](#). Alan suggested one of the realtors from the Whatcom Farm Expo could speak to what it's like to purchase farmland in Whatcom County. Fred mentioned a possible future discussion around riparian buffers, habitat, and the intersection with ag once changes to CREP & SCC resources are finalized.

Roger Hawley expressed concerns about increasing regulations that may be directed disproportionately toward farmers as opposed to other types of land use or pollution sources.

Roger Kubalek suggested bringing in representatives from different ag sectors (dairy, berry, beef, etc.) to share successes, challenges, & needs.

Elli requested more information about the proposal to re-zone the Rural Study Areas (to be presented by Chris Elder). She also suggested more discussion about the concerns within the ag community regarding potential financial impacts to them if the RSAs were to be re-zoned.

Fred pointed out that Whatcom County is unique in how much land values are escalating. It was proposed that perhaps more analysis could be done to compare the cost & benefit of participating in Conservation Easement Programs.

**7- Review of AAC Goals & Draft Memo to Related Advisory Committees** – starting at 01:43:00

Discussion was had around a drafted Memorandum to collaborate in a sub-committee with other advisory committees that intersect with the AAC's work (climate, housing, forestry, food systems, etc.). The goal would be to meet with representatives of other committees in a sub-committee fashion and clarify where there are common goals that can be promoted in unison by a number of committees. The draft memo was reviewed and approved for distribution to move the process forward. Elli motioned, Clay seconded.

**8- Staff & Member Updates** - starting at 01:48:55

It was discussed that the proposed change to the Ag Zoning code to allow for propane as a conditional use was approved by Whatcom County Council on April 9th, 2024. The AAC voted to support the proposed change when it was presented to the AAC at the December 13, 2023 meeting. Since then the proposed code change went forward in the process, and some AAC members expressed concern that the listed conditions may not be sufficiently protective. It was acknowledged that the AAC is strictly an advisory committee and that the decision ultimately rested with Whatcom County Council. The code change was supported by a number of prominent members of the agricultural community.

A new application to fill an AAC member position for Ag Producer is pending approval by Whatcom County Council.

The possible removal of Gurjit Singh was considered as he has not attended a meeting in some time. It was agreed to make one final effort to contact him and if that is not successful to possibly recommend his removal by the Executive.

**9- New business**

No new business was presented

**10- Action items and next agenda – 01:59:50**

Next meeting topics included an update on advisory committee coordination, a presentation from Chris Elder about the concept of re-zoning the Rural Study Areas, consideration of a possible retreat format to designate subcommittee work over the summer session, and discussion of whether or not to continue meeting during the summer.

**11- Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024 from 3-5 p.m. to be held both in-person and virtually.

DRAFT