



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
September 12, 2024**

Regular Meeting 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, Suneeta Eisenberg, Atul Deshmane, Jim Hansen, Scott Van
6 Dalen

7 **Absent:** Frank James, Dominic Mocerri, Stephen Jackson, Julie Jefferson

8 **Staff Present:** Steve Roberge, Cliff Strong, Amy Keenan, Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Jacqui
9 Sullivan and Garrett Smith

10 **Department Update**

11 Steve Roberge, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS),
12 provided information on what was discussed at the County Council meeting that
13 occurred on Tuesday. Council discussed the Planning Commission recommendation
14 regarding code scrub and is planning to hold a public hearing on it on September 24th.
15 Council also discussed the shoreline amendments that were recommended several
16 years ago from the Planning Commission and finally made their way back to the
17 Council. There may be a public hearing on that topic for council on September 24th.
18 Mr. Roberge mentioned the next Planning Commission meeting will have two public
19 hearings regarding the Heavy Impact Industrial (HII) in the Bellingham Urban Growth
20 Area (UGA) and the permit review timelines for 5290.

21 **Open Session Public Comment**

22 Lisa Adam, Bryan Sarni, Sarah Gardner, Perry Eskridge and Coleman Hoyt provided
23 public comment.

24 **Commissioner Comments**

25 Commissioner Hansen stated he met with the Forest Resilience Committee and they
26 are in the process of creating goals and objectives for a plan on forest resilience that
27 should be out by the end of the year hopefully before the Comp Plan revisions.

28 Commissioner Deshmane attended a conference for Building Industry Association of
29 Whatcom County (BIAWC), Government Relations meeting, where they discussed the
30 amendments to the code related to permitting based on the recent state legislation.

31 **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

32 **Timestamp: 6:53**

33 **1 Commissioner Eisenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes from August 22,**
34 **2024**

35 **Commissioner Deshmane seconded.**

36 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Deshmane, Eisenberg, Barton**

37 **Abstain- Van Dalen, Hansen (Ayes3-; Nays-0; Abstain-2). The motion passes.**



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
September 12, 2024**

Regular Meeting and Work Session

2

1 **Work Session Regarding Proposed Amendments to enact SSB 5290**

2 **Timestamp: 6:55**

3 Amy Keenan, Special Projects Manager PDS, provided information regarding what is
4 required to comply with new State legislation to update the code SSB 5290. This is an
5 informational presentation and will have the public hearing at the next Planning
6 Commission meeting. Right now, PDS is looking internally at how to improve their
7 permitting process as they are currently, looking at staffing and how permitting
8 processes can improve internally.

9 Ms. Keenan continued her presentation with the changes that will be made through
10 this new code change such as, timelines for permits, refund eligibility of permit fees,
11 and annual reporting.

12 Commissioner Hansen asked if the funding is in place to staff up to accommodate this
13 code change and the intricacies of herding applications through human resources.

14 Steve Roberge responded the department requested some funds to do a study on the
15 department. The study will be looking at staffing levels as well as some of the
16 department's processes. The hope is to get that contract out within the next month or
17 so and the review started.

18 Commissioner Chair Barton disclosed that the boundary line adjustment project he will
19 be doing on his property will have no influence on any proposed changes being made
20 on the documents that pertain to the code amendment regarding boundary line
21 adjustments.

22 Cliff Strong, PDS Senior Planner presented the code amendments that are being
23 requested for SSB 5290 which Ms. Keenan spoke on in her presentation. Mr. Strong
24 continued his presentation on some deficiencies that need to be fixed within WCC Title
25 22.

26 Commissioner Deshmane wondered about performance and simulation. There is an
27 intent in this legislation that will make the process timely, but how do we make sure
28 that intent is met.

29 Ms. Keenan responded that the law requires the code be changed regardless if we have
30 staffing for this change. PDS will be doing an outreach to acquire data on this and will
31 find the staffing for it.

32 Mr. Roberge stated that the short time frame will be the main issue in this new
33 change.

34 Commissioner Deshmane asked how will staff respond with what they discover in this
35 process moving into the new year? What will be the process to have the metric system
36 work within the new code?

37 Mr. Roberge responded that PDS hopes to do outreaches and see if what we are doing
38 works and create continuous improvement processes. The hope is to get the feedback
39 needed to create the efficiency needed.

40 Commissioner Deshmane suggested to structure the annual reporting in a way that will
41 be helpful to better look at the data.

42 Mr. Roberge stated that PDS has to comply with the state's reporting requirement



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
September 12, 2024**

Regular Meeting and Work Session

3

1 Garrett Smith, Natural Resources Division Manager, elaborated on what is being
2 reported to the public and what is being done internally such as number of permits
3 being submitted annually and permits being issued.

4 **Work Session Regarding Heavy Impact Industrial in the Bellingham UGA**

5 **Timestamp:**

6 Cliff Strong, PDS Senior Planner provided the uses that were requested at the prior
7 meeting to discuss tonight. Mr. Strong proposed to add definitions to primary and
8 secondary manufacture products within the code, to clarify what may or may not be
9 appropriate for the area. Mr. Strong continued discussing the specific uses the
10 Commissioners requested to discuss at the prior Commission meeting.

11 Commissioners discussed in further detail on the uses and prohibited uses within the
12 Bellingham UGA such as, bulk commodities storages (warehouses), thermal energy
13 plant, hemp and cannabis production facilities, and battery energy storage systems.

14 Mr. Roberge reminded the commission that Council laid out a two-step process with
15 looking at the initial zoning amendments and the second step being done through the
16 Comprehensive Plan.

17 Commissioner Deshmane recommended to either do a separate resolution to this topic
18 for now and make a future recommendation to Council to docket an item for the
19 Planning Commission to consider for an in-depth study in this particular UGA.

20

21 **Adjournment**

22 **Timestamp: 8:09**

23 The meeting was adjourned at 8:09p p.m.

24 Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

25 WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

26 

27 Kelvin Barton, Chair



Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Secretary