

**Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
January 14, 2026**

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

Meeting Highlights
There were 11 people in attendance (Voting members: 7 of 10, Staff members: 2, Ex-Officio: 0, Others: 2).

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Kubalek, Roger (chair)	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Steele, Eliza (vice chair)	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chapman, Alan	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Likkel, Fred	Whatcom Family Farmers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pehl, Clay	Consumer of Ag Products	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawley, Roger	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Del Giorgio, Isaiah	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lenssen, Austin	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Richner, Brandon	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Byers, Michael	Ag Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Processing	<input type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Ag Programs	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quorum Present	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
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Attendees – Ex-Official/Contributing	Affiliation	Present
Corina Cheever	Whatcom Conservation District	
Chris Benedict	WSU Extension	
Alex Hall	NRCS	
Emma Karber	FFA Youth	

Attendees - Staff
Dakota Stranik, Planner PDS Alex Harris, PDS

Others Present
Mike Poteet, SCC Victoria Fischella, SCC

Recording:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/AgendaCenter>

1- Roll call and introductions – starting at 00:00:08 in recording
WCC 2.3.100(2) establishes that “a quorum for the purpose of holding a meeting and taking action will be more than one-half of the total number of filled voting committee positions.” A quorum was established with 7 of 10 appointed voting members present.

2- Agenda Review & Adjustments – starting at 00:01:25 in recording
No adjustments were made to the agenda.

3- Open Public Session – starting at 00:01:38 in recording
There was no public comment.

4- Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – starting at 00:02:04 in recording
Minutes were reviewed for the previous meeting on December 10, 2025. Alan motioned to approve and Roger H seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved with one edit to correct a spelling error.

5- Special Topics – starting at 00:02:54 in recording
Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) – starting at 00:02:54 in recording
Mike Poteet, VSP Coordinator with the Washington State Conservation Commission, gave a presentation on the [Voluntary Stewardship Program \(VSP\)](#), which provides an alternative approach to protecting and enhancing Critical Areas, as opposed to the standard approach of a [Critical Areas Ordinance \(CAO\)](#), currently used by Whatcom County (under [WCC 16.16](#)) and a number of other Puget Sound Counties. The VSP program is specifically built for agriculture while incorporating close participation and feedback from partners such as tribes, local government, conservation districts, and environmental agencies such as the WA Dept of Ecology and the WA Dept of Fish & Wildlife. The program was developed through a number of reports and studies developed by the [William D Ruckelshaus Center](#). A map of enrolled counties as well as links to their respective work plans and reports is [available online](#). Presentation slides are attached. After some Q&A after the presentation, it was suggested to have some follow-up discussion at the next meeting to determine an official committee stance on VSP adoption and next steps.

December Flood Impacts – starting at 01:17:20 in recording
The discussion was brief due to the previous topic running long. Alan shared efforts by the Conservation District to gather information from impacted agricultural operations and their needs. Eliza asked what opportunity exists for the AAC to engage with long term planning around flooding and the impacts to agriculture. Isaiah mentioned drainage and ditch maintenance as an area that has impacts to agriculture (increased flooding, disease from too much moisture, etc) but maintenance seems to be prioritized in residential areas. Alan mentioned the FLIP team being coordinated by River & Flood for integrated planning, as well as a number of flood zone advisory committees as opportunities to engage. Dakota mentioned challenges with flood impacts to EPL Feed in Sumas and the concern that brings for local dairy farms, as well as potential limitations with manure storage on dairies

6- Subcommittee Updates – starting at 01:29:40 in recording

Ag Staffing Subcommittee -

This subcommittee met and discussed possible options. VSP funding could potentially provide some options for agricultural staff in a certain capacity. Precedents for other counties' existing ag planners are also being considered.

Meat Processing Subcommittee -

This subcommittee has developed some draft code changes to consider moving forward to council. PDS will possibly be docketing this work in February or March, which would enable council support for PDS to work on further analysis of the code changes and moving them forward for consideration by Council. Dakota provided a brief review of the code changes currently being discussed. Michael motioned to enable Dakota to take next steps to get the action of updating the meat processing (slaughterhouse/packinghouse) code to the docket. Eliza seconded the motion. Alan suggested bringing the issue to council first via a presentation before docketing. The motioned passed with Eliza, Roger H, Isaiah, and Austin in favor and Alan opposed. Roger K did not vote.

7- Staff & Member Updates – starting at 02:05:42 in recording

There were no staff or member updates.

8- New Business – starting at 02:05:51 in recording

Roger K mentioned he is reaching out to three potential candidates for member vacancies and will update the group if anything moves forward.

9- Action Items & Next Agenda – starting at 02:06:31 in recording

The topics of agritourism as well as the Whatcom County Food System Plan are possible special topics for discussion at the February meeting.

10- Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m. The next regular meeting will be scheduled on Wednesday, February 11th from 2pm to 4pm. The meeting will be held as a hybrid via Zoom and in person at Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (5280 Northwest Drive).