



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 12, 2026**

Public Hearing and Work Session

1 **Call to Order**

2 The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair
3 Dunne at 6:00 p.m.

4 **Roll Call**

5 **Present:** Matthew Berry, Rud Browne, Daniel Dunne, Nicholas Greif, Dominic Mocerì,
6 Scott Van Dalen

7 Jim Hansen arrived at 6:09 p.m.

8 **Absent:** Suneeta Eisenberg,

9 **Staff Present:** Mark Personius, Alexander Harris, Lauren Templeton, Aileen Kogut-
10 Aguon and Christine Larsen

11 **Department Update**

12 Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), gave an update
13 on what staff has recently brought forward to Council and what they have approved:

- 14 • Council is continuing their deliberations for the Comprehensive Plan. They have
15 done chapters 1, 2, and 3 and have tentatively finished chapter 1 and chapter 3.
- 16 • They have amended and approved the docket and 6 of those items have been
17 completed. Mr. Personius noted that not all of the docket items are to be done
18 within the year.
- 19 • Council appointed a new Planning Commissioner, Selena Knoblauch from District
20 1. Suneeta Eisenberg put in her resignation for the Commission and the
21 application for her seat is open and published on the website.

22 Mr. Personius finished his update, stating that the next Commission meeting will be on
23 another Open Space application for BP, noting he will not be in attendance, but
24 Alexander Harris will be back to present the application to the Commission. On April
25 9th, the Housing Code Amendments is scheduled to go to the Commission.

26 Commissioner Mocerì asked about the Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs) change and
27 if that would affect the current applications and those that have either been denied or
28 approved in the past.

29 Mr. Personius stated there will be a conversation with legal counsel regarding that
30 issue.

31 Commission Chair Dunne asked how the population change County Council adopted,
32 changed the housing need in Birch Bay and Columbia Valley.

33 Mr. Personius stated that the population change reduced the rural and resource land
34 allocations by 1700 people to get to the medium projections for non-UGA growth.

35 **Open Session Public Comment**

36 There was no public comment.



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Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Van Dalen stated that he will be out of town the week of April 9th and will be back from his vacation April 14th if a special meeting needs to occur.

Commissioner Browne asked where the 1,700 people that were taken out of the low-income housing are expected to go?

Mr. Personius stated that the change reduced the overall demand because they reduced the overall countywide population.

Commissioner Browne stated for the record that the county reduced 1,700 homes for the lowest of the income band as Bellingham said they cannot fund 6,000 homes for low income either.

Mr. Personius stated that the number is a reduction in population and not homes.

Commissioner Hansen stated that his feedback from the Council meeting is that they realized it is not in the peoples' best interest to push low-income housing out into rural ghettos.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Timestamp: 6:18p

Motion 1. Commissioner Greif moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 26, 2026

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Mocerri, Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne, Greif

(Ayes- 7; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Timestamp: 6:18p

Open Space Application – OSP2025-00002

Timestamp: 6:18p

Alexander Harris, PDS Planner II, provided a brief overview of the Open Space program. He presented the Open Space Land (OSL) application for the Homesteader Road property – OSP2025-00002. The public benefits rating system (PBRs) score was a 58.64, over the minimum threshold of 45 required to receive a recommendation of approval from PDS. Public access is usually required for Open Space applications, however, county policy dictates that if there are species present on the property that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, then PDS automatically recommends approval without public access being required. There are 3 endangered species present on this particular property, and therefore, PDS recommends approval with no public access required. Mr. Harris also shared that a resident elk population uses the property heavily. Mr. Harris shared that the landowners expressed concern about the poaching of elk in the area, and they wanted to make sure public access on their property didn't make the poaching problem worse.

Commissioner Browne stated for the record that he owns property adjacent to the proposed property.



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1 Commissioner Berry asked what endangered species are on the property.

2 Mr. Harris stated the endangered species are the Oregon-spotted frog, winter
3 steelhead and bull trout.

4 **a) Public Hearing**

5 Timestamp: 6:45p

6 Ken and Cary Lane, the property owners applying for Open Space, provided public
7 comment.

8 **b) Work Session**

9 Timestamp: 6:50p

10 Commission Chair Dunne recognized the Lane Property Owners, giving them the floor
11 to answer the questions being asked of them.

12 Commissioner Hansen stated that he was involved in helping with habitat restoration
13 on the south fork of the property.

14 Commissioner Berry stated that if the property cannot be developed and it is in
15 wetlands, the property should be valued as recreational property, noting that
16 conservation includes harvesting of game.

17 Commissioner Greif asked about the parcel and whether or not the parcel has had its
18 property taxes adjusted in recognition of the conservation easement on the property.

19 Christine Larsen, Assessor's Office, stated that the property is receiving a reduction for
20 it being a Conservation Easement, but unsure of the percentage at the moment.

21 Mr. Harris stated that the conservation easement only applies to 34 of the 38-acre
22 property.

23 Commissioner Hansen asked about the potential development part of the parcel and
24 the presence of endangered species.

25 Mr. Harris stated that if there are endangered species on the property, per the PBRS,
26 staff is automatically required to approve the application.

27 Ms. Larsen stated for the record that the land is currently receiving a 25% reduction
28 due to the conservation easement.

29 ***Motion 2. Commissioner Hansen moved to accept the Open Space Application***
30 ***as presented.***

31 **Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.**

32 Commissioner Greif asked a clarifying question about whether or not
33 Commissioner Browne should abstain from the vote.

34 Commissioner Browne will abstain from voting.

35 ***Call the Question. Commissioner Hansen moved to call the question.***

36 **Commissioner Greif seconded.**

37 **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Berry, Browne, Dunne, Greif,**
38 **Hansen**



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1

Nays- Mocerì

2

(Ayes- 6; Nays- 1; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

3

Timestamp: 7:32p

4

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Berry, Dunne, Greif, Hansen

5

Nays- Mocerì

6

Abstain- Browne

7

(Ayes- 5; Nays- 1; Abstain- 1). The motion carried.

8

Timestamp: 7:33p

9

Adjournment

10

Timestamp: 7:33p

11

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

12


Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

13


WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

14

15



Daniel Dunne, Chair



Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Coordinator