



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive Bellingham, WA 98226
PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us
360-778-5900

MEETING **Surface Mining Advisory Committee**

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom (details below) and
NW Annex Conference Room
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226**

**Date: February 25th, 2026
Time: 3:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

Whatcom County PDS is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Individuals who require special assistance to participate in the meetings are asked to contact Lucas Clark at Lclark@whatcomCounty.us at least 24 hours in advance.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81887836179?pwd=aGhoalpCM2luVUNnSndKbXFmRktDUT09>

Meeting ID: 818 8783 6179

Passcode: 427243

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,81887836179#,,,,*427243# US (Tacoma)

+12532050468,,81887836179#,,,,*427243# US

Dial by your location

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Meeting ID: 818 8783 6179

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TO: Surface Mining Advisory
Committee

FROM: Lucas Clark, Planner II

DATE: February 25, 2026

SUBJECT: Meeting Agenda

1. Roll call/Determination of Quorum
2. Agenda Review & Approval
3. Review/Approval of Summary from 1/28/26
4. Open session for the public to speak on surface mining issues
5. Industry/staff reports on Mining Industry News
6. Review and approval of Business Rules
7. Old Business
 - a) Public Noticing options/requirements for CUPs & ADM
 - b) Ongoing Best Available Data on current mine production/reserves
 - c) Heat Map update
 - d) Update on potential Ryan Ransavage presentation on MRL designation and processes and geology in other counties
8. New Business
 - a) ADA Zoom compliance
9. Adjourn

Attachments:

1. Meeting Summary January 28th, 2025
2. Business Rules

Attachment #1



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TO: Surface Mining Advisory Committee
FROM: Lucas Clark, Planner II
DATE: January 28, 2026
SUBJECT: Meeting Agenda

1. Roll call/Determination of Quorum - Yes
2. Agenda Review & Approval - Yes
3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair - Yes
4. Review/Approval of Summary from 12/4/25 - Approved
5. Open session for the public to speak on surface mining issues
6. Industry/staff reports on Mining Industry News
7. Old Business
 - a) Updated Mineral Resource Study
 - b) Review MRL Designation Criteria
 - c) Discuss streamlining the process for moving MRL-designated lands to production, including evaluation of current permitting timelines and possible improvements.
8. New Business
 - a)
9. Adjourn 4:28

Whatcom County Surface Mining Area Committee (SMAC)

Attendance Sheet

Date: January 28th, 2025

Location: Zoom and Northwest Annex Conference Room @ Whatcom County Planning and

Development Services office at 5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Start Time: 3:00PM

Quorum: Yes X No

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Vacant	Civil or geotechnical engineer with no direct or indirect financial business ties to the industry	
Ryan Devries	Surface mining material user	X
Mr. John Byers	Geologist	X
Mr. Lane Stremmer Chair	Citizen who lives in close proximity to active mining or mineral overlay areas	X
Brent Cowden	Member of the surface mining industry	X
Mr. Jordan Van Werven	Member of the surface mining industry	X
Kathleen Greenbaum	Forestry	X
Carl Isom-McDaniel	Potable domestic groundwater supply	X
Vacant	Ecologist	
Vacant	Environmental Consultant	
Vacant	Agriculture	
Elected OF		
Staff		
Lucas Clark		X
Andy Weiser		X
Public		

Key takeaways

Stremmer was re-elected as Chair and Isom-McDaniel as Vice Chair for the Surface Mining Advisory Committee

House Bill 2454 was discussed, which would change the size requirements for sites subject to the Surface Mining Act from 3 to 7 acres

The committee discussed a proposed code change regarding vertical mine expansions

Members debated whether vertical mine expansions should require a full Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process or could be handled through Administrative (ADM) revisions

PDS is working on updating mineral resource data and awaiting a "heat map" of mineral resources from the consultant

Next steps

Wiser (Whatcom County staff): Look into public noticing options (including but not limited to public comment or public notice requirements) for ADM (Administrative Use Permit) permit revisions related to Surface Mines, and report back to the committee.

Cowden: Update and compile the best available data on current mine production/reserves, including following up with operators and using available annual mining sheets, and present a more accurate estimate at the next meeting.

Clark (Whatcom County staff): Follow up with the consultant/contractor to obtain the draft heat map and, once received, send it out to the committee.

Van Werven: Reach out to Ryan Ransavage (Miles Sand and Gravel geologist) to arrange for him to provide input or a presentation to the committee on MRL designation processes and geology in other counties.

Stremmer: Obtain and share updated cost estimates/quotes for updating the Mineral Resource Study (MRL study) before the committee considers formally requesting an update.

Summary

Mining Operations Consolidation Update

The meeting began with a roll call to confirm a quorum, and the agenda was reviewed, including the election of chair and vice chair. Lane Stremmer was elected as chair, and Carl Isom-McDaniel as vice chair. The group approved the meeting summary from December 4, 2025.

During the open session, Weiser provided an update on mining industry news, specifically regarding a proposed consolidation of mining operations on the Buren Road complex, where multiple owners would combine their permits under Miles.

SEPA Determinations

Greenbaum inquired about the distribution list for SEPA determinations and discovered they had not issued a SEPA determination, prompting a discussion about the process for reviewing applications.

ADM Revision/2025 Code Amendments

Mine Expansion Permitting Process

The group discussed the permitting process for mine expansions, particularly focusing on whether vertical expansions should be treated as ADM revisions or require conditional use permits. The discussion revealed confusion about the origins of the current permitting process. Staff explained that in 2014, the county switched from administrative to conditional use permits for new and expanding mines, as recommended by the SMAC. The conversation included the discussion of the Hearing Examiner's recent decision, which supported treating vertical expansions as new permits rather than revisions.

The group debated whether public comment should be required for such expansions, with concerns raised about opening existing operations to new public scrutiny. Cowden shared that several mining companies would benefit from streamlined processes for vertical expansions, while Byers suggested that public comment could actually be beneficial for transparency.

Gravel Pit Expansion Permit Discussion

The group discussed concerns about a gravel pit's expansion, particularly regarding public comment periods and environmental impacts. Cowden expressed reservations about reopening the facility to public comment, while Wiser noted that existing mining operations already have use permits that would remain valid regardless of new permit applications, though they must file annual surface mine registration fees. They debated the distinction between vertical and horizontal mining operations, with Stremler suggesting that while vertical mining should be addressed, existing operations shouldn't face new public comment requirements. Wiser clarified that mining permits typically don't have expiration dates like other types of permits, though there are requirements for annual fees and registration

Clark clarified two routes for potential code amendments to the ADM code. The first was to have County Council docket a development regulation amendment during the yearly review of the docket on or about March 1st. That would give PDS the ability to assign staff and time to review the code changes with the SMAC, then take the proposed changes to the PC, and

eventually County Council. The other potential route is for the SMAC to review the code, and prepare a report to share with PC and potentially the County Council.

Adjourn: 4:28

Attachment #2

BUSINESS RULES AND PROCEDURES

SURFACE MINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

The Whatcom County Surface Mining Advisory Committee (SMAC), being formed by the County Council pursuant to Ordinance 2000-017, adopted May 2, 2000 (see also Ordinance 2002-030), does hereby adopt the following rules and procedures for the transaction of its business:

1. NAME

The official name is the "Whatcom County Surface Mining Advisory Committee."

2. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The authority for the SMAC is set forth in Whatcom County Code 2.120. The purpose of the SMAC is to advise the Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department and the Whatcom County Council on implementing a surface mining regulatory program consistent with the Comprehensive Plan (WCC 2.120.020).

3. OFFICERS - ELECTION

The SMAC shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson. These officers are elected for terms of one year.

In the event of a vacancy in the office of chairperson, the vice-chairperson automatically becomes the chairperson. A vacancy occurring in the office of vice-chairperson is filled by election of a replacement to serve for the un-expired portion of the term. A vacancy in an office automatically occurs upon the third consecutive unexcused absence of an officer from the regular meetings or upon a vote by a majority of the total membership.

4. OFFICER DUTIES

The chairperson has the responsibility of presiding at meetings of the SMAC, placing items on the agenda, calling special meetings, canceling meetings, and excusing members for valid reasons from attendance at SMAC meetings.

The vice-chairperson assumes the responsibilities of the chairperson in his/her absence.

5. MEETINGS

The regular meeting times will be the fourth Wednesday of the month from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., when called by the chair. The regular meeting place will be in the Whatcom County Northwest Annex Conference Room at 5280 Northwest Dr. A regular meeting that falls on a legal holiday is ordinarily held on the next business day.

Special meetings may be called by consensus of the members at a regular meeting. Special meetings may also be called by order of the chairperson upon giving written notice to other members at least 24 hours before the meeting. The written notice must state the time, place and business to be transacted. Final action cannot be taken on any item that is not included on the agenda.

All meetings shall be open to the public.

6. ATTENDANCE

The chairperson, upon the fourth consecutive unexcused absence of any member from the regular meetings, shall bring forward the issue to the full SMAC to consider a recommendation to the County Council for replacement of that member.

7. QUORUM – DECISION MAKING

A majority of the currently appointed members is required to conduct regular business.

Decision-making will be by majority vote, with a minimum of the majority of currently appointed members votes' required to pass. A vote by proxy shall be allowed with written documentation.

Any decision reached by vote may be accompanied by a majority or minority report at the discretion of the majority or the minority, provided that any report shall be specific to the decision.

8. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The regular order of business is as follows:

- (a) Roll call
- (b) Determination of Quorum

- (c) Approval or modification of minutes
- (d) Open session for the public to speak on surface mining issues
- (e) Staff reports or agency presentations
- (f) SMAC discussion, deliberations and decision-making
- (g) Adjournment

9. OPEN SESSION FOR THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON SURFACE MINING ISSUES

The Chairperson or the committee may limit speakers to three (3) minutes per meeting to make their points, and open session may be limited to 20 minutes, at the discretion of the chair.

10. REPORTING TO THE WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

- a. The SMAC shall forward any proposed amendments to the Whatcom County Code, deemed necessary to implement the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, to the County Council for consideration.
- b. A member may be chosen to represent the SMAC in front of the County Council or a Council Committee regarding a particular matter.
- c. All SMAC members will sign the report forwarded to the County Council to reflect the recommendations of the committee.
- d. Any SMAC member may address the County Council on any issue relating to surface mining. The member must state clearly if he/she is speaking on behalf of the SMAC or in another capacity.

11. MINUTES AND RECORDS

Meetings will be audio taped and minutes will be maintained (WCC 2.120.050). Minutes shall be approved by the SMAC and signed by the chairperson.

12. NOTICE - AGENDA

Copies of the agenda will be e-mailed or placed in the mail to SMAC members at least one week prior to the next meeting.

13. STAFF

The Planning & Development Services Department will provide staffing for the SMAC (WCC 2.120.060).

14. AMENDMENT


These rules may be amended by the SMAC, provided notice of the amendment has been placed in the mail or delivered to the member at least one week in advance.

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED ON THE 27TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2000


REVISED ON THE 27TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2002

REVISED ON THE 16TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2005

REVISED ON THE 26TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2014



SMAC Chairperson



Date