Docusign Envelope ID: 966351F0-DEA3-4A2B-91CE-20E5CAD083E2

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION JANUARY 22, 2026

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Whatcom County Planning Commission Chair, Kelvin Barton at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Kelvin Barton, Suneeta Eisenberg, Rud Browne, Jim Hansen, Daniel Dunne, Dominic Moceri, Scott Van Dalen,

Nicholas Greif arrived at: 6:37 p.m.

Absent: Julie Jefferson

Staff Present: Mark Personius, Matt Aamot, Lucas Clark, Maddie Schacht, Lauren Clemens and Aileen Kogut-Aguon

Department Update

Mark Personius, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), stated that tonight is the final Comprehensive Plan public hearing for the Commission before moving it on to County Council. He noted that staff have regularly updated Council throughout the Comp Plan process. Council will be discussing Chapter 4: Capital Facilities and Chapter 5: Utilities at their next meeting. Mr. Personius finished his update stating there are two Commission seats vacant as of January 31st, noting that Commissioner Van Dalen has reapplied and has been approved by Council for a second term.

Open Session Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Comments

There were no Commissioner comments.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Timestamp: 6:08p

1Commissioner Dunne moved *to approve the meeting minutes from December 4th, 11th, 16th and 18th, 2025.*

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Hansen, Moceri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg, Barton

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

Final Comprehensive Plan Update

Timestamp: 6:09p

Matt Aamot, PDS Senior Planner, provided a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan Update, including the discussion to date and the proposed changes sent to the Commission regarding Appendix I (Housing Needs Analysis) and Appendix A (Glossary).

Docusign Envelope ID: 966351F0-DEA3-4A2B-91CE-20E5CAD083E2

a) Public Hearing

Timestamp: 6:11p

Peter Frazier, Dan Tucker, Chris Secrist, Matt Lloyd, Coleman Hoyt, Brian Gass, Dwayne Engelsman, Peter Condyles, Craig Zimmerman, David Parsons, Bridget Bryk, Bill Geyer, and Perry Eskridge provided public comment.

b) Work Session

Timestamp: 6:53p

Commissioner Browne asked about where Heavy Industrial Impact (HII) is mentioned in Policy 2U-9.

2Commissioner Browne moved *to strike Policy 2U-9.*

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Commissioner Browne explained his reasoning for striking out policy 2U-9, stating that both HII and the Light Impact Industrial (LII) Zoning Districts are needed to support affordable housing and employment growth. He emphasized the importance of a broader countywide discussion on industrial zoning that considers the needs of both businesses and residents, rather than focusing on a single area.

The Commission noted the need to provide alternatives that balance housing and employment growth throughout the county without downzoning existing HII areas.

Commissioner Browne stated that striking out the policy now would solve the problem of double land supply, and then the Commission can revisit this issue in the future.

Commissioner Moceri expressed that including language in the Comprehensive Plan acknowledging the need for a future discussion on industrial zoning is preferable to omitting the issue entirely and removing the policy.

> ***Amendment*: Commissioner Dunne moved to** *amend Policy 2U-9 to say: "Coordinate with the City of Bellingham in evaluating benefits and costs of existing or proposed industrial zoning in the Bellingham UGA and seek additional industrial zoning sites countywide in coordination with the Whatcom County Industrial Lands Study (July 2025)."*
>
> **Commissioner Browne seconded.**
>
> **Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Moceri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg, Greif, Hansen, Barton**
>
> **(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.**

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg, Greif, Hansen, Browne, Barton

(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.

Timestamp: 7:12p

3Commissioner Moceri moved *to adjust the definition in Appendix A (Glossary) to match the definition in Chapter 2 on Urban Community Forests to read:*

Docusign Envelope ID: 966351F0-DEA3-4A2B-91CE-20E5CAD083E2

"Urban and community forests include vegetated areas on lands in urban growth areas. Specifically, this includes any land with trees and associated vegetation, whether it's planted or naturally occurring, used or unused, and includes areas along roads, utilities, and forested watersheds within populated zones. Designate urban and community forests on public land greater than 5 acres with over 75% tree canopy."

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

The motion was withdrawn.
Timestamp: 7:23p

4Commissioner Dunne moved *to remove Urban and Community Forest definition from Appendix A (Glossary).*

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Commissioner Moceri asked where the definition originated.

Mr. Aamot stated it came from an RCW that is unrelated to the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA states that the county needs to designate these areas, but provides no definition for the term, and does not provide direction on what to do with designated areas.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg, Greif, Barton

Nays- Hansen

Abstain- Moceri

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

Timestamp: 7:26p

Commissioner Moceri asked about the data for Appendix I (Housing Needs Analysis) and the proposed amended language that was sent to the Commission regarding emergency shelter beds.

Mr. Aamot explained that the data for the Land Capacity Analysis for emergency housing beds, a new GMA requirement, was received from a couple of the cities prior to the meeting. Staff is proposing to add:

> *A land capacity analysis was conducted for each UGA to compare the total emergency shelter beds needed in the UGA to the land capacity for such beds. These analyses show that there is adequate land capacity to accommodate the emergency shelter beds allocated to each UGA."*

Commissioner Dunne expressed his concern on adding the language before seeing the land capacity analysis data.

Commissioner Dunne discussed the public comment from Futurewise, explaining that they would appeal the Comp Plan on Agricultural (AG) lands and the lack of low-income housing.

Commissioner Moceri asked about Columbia Valley LII zoning in the Foothills Subarea Plan in Exhibit B of the packet.

Docusign Envelope ID: 966351F0-DEA3-4A2B-91CE-20E5CAD083E2

Mr. Aamot stated that staff is proposing to update the Foothills Subarea plan, with related rezoning the area north of Limestone Rd. in the existing Columbia Valley UGA from Rural Forestry (RF) to LII, to potentially add employment opportunities for the area. He added that General Commercial (GC) Zoning District would be expanded by 5-acres to avoid split zone parcels, and some Urban Residential 4 units per acre (UR-4) would be rezoned to Urban Residential Medium density 6-units per acre (URM-6). This change would align with House Bill 1220, allowing multifamily housing.

5Commissioner Moceri moved *to update the Foothills Subarea Plan map to match the proposal for the Columbia Valley UGA Map 2-3, and modify Policy CVI-D, number 1, to read: Mitigate traffic impacts and address infrastructure/ utility/service needs through the land division and development permitting process.*

Commissioner Browne seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Browne, Dunne, Greif, Moceri, Van Dalen, Barton

Nays- Eisenberg, Hansen

Abstain- (Ayes- 6; Nays- 2; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.
Timestamp: 7:37p

6Commissioner Browne moved *to approve his letter as revised and attach it to the Comprehensive Plan update.*

Commissioner Dunne seconded.

Commissioner Browne stated that if the Comprehensive Plan is approved without this restriction for Bellingham and Blaine, it will cause less affordable housing, raising taxes for housing by 3,000 dollars per household.

Chris Behee, Bellingham Long Range Planning Division Manager, clarified that the $133 million funding gap identified for Bellingham came from the land capacity analysis and stated, “You know, we need 220 of those just to completely fulfill the need of the income ranges that we have in our community and that we anticipate having over the next 20 years that that we would need to somehow come up with.”

Mr. Behee then clarified that Bellingham’s plan does not propose a $3,000 per-household tax increase and that such an approach would not be feasible.

Commissioner Moceri expressed concern with the wording in the first paragraph of the letter, specifically the phrase “rejecting the Comprehensive Plan” based on the Bellingham and Blaine proposal. He stated that the language should reflect that the Commission is recommending approval of the Comp Plan, with the caveat that Council re-evaluates Bellingham and Blaine’s proposal first.

> **Amended language for the first paragraph:** The Whatcom County Planning Commission recommends that you require the Cities of Bellingham and Blaine adopt reasonable measures (as defined by the Growth Management Act) to amend their plans to meet their obligations under the GMA.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Dunne, Moceri, Van Dalen, Browne, Barton

Nays- Greif, Hansen

Docusign Envelope ID: 966351F0-DEA3-4A2B-91CE-20E5CAD083E2

Abstain- Eisenberg (Ayes- 5; Nays- 2; Abstain- 1). The motion carried.
Timestamp: 8:09p

7Commissioner Barton moved *to recommend the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update to Council with the associated findings.*

Commissioner Van Dalen seconded.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he opposes the motion because this plan side steps the GMA and will cause sprawl. He agrees with Futurewise that there needs to be changes in the UGAs.

Commissioner Greif expressed his gratitude to the Commission for their hard work in getting through the Comp Plan, and his thoughts on the GMA and the jurisdictions proposals.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Eisenberg, Greif, Moceri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Barton

Nays- Hansen

(Ayes- 7; Nays- 1; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.
Timestamp: 8:14p

8Commissioner Moceri moved *to* direct Staff after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by the County Council to do a full audit of costs associated with the Comprehensive Plan update, including staff time and consultants and present the results to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Dunne seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes- Greif, Hansen, Moceri, Van Dalen, Browne, Dunne, Eisenberg, Barton

(Ayes- 8; Nays- 0; Abstain- 0). The motion carried.
Timestamp: 8:17p

Other Business
Timestamp: 8:17p

Mr. Personius presented Commission Chair Barton with a plaque and certificate of completion for serving 10 years on the Commission, with 6 years as Chairman.

Adjournment
Timestamp: 8:20p

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Aileen Kogut-Aguon.

WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

Signed by: Daniel Dunne 9520F8EF9A854B4...
Daniel Dunne, Chair

Signed by: Aileen Kogut-Aguon 2698EFC1750444F...
Aileen Kogut-Aguon, Coordinator