



# Planning & Development Services

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## Memorandum

To: Planning Commission  
From: Sarah Ruether, Long Range Planning Manager  
Re: Supplemental Memo for Hearing on Ag. Board Proposed Agritourism Code Changes  
Date: July 19, 2023

### Summary

Planning and Development Services (PDS) is providing this supplemental memo in advance of the July 25<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission hearing on the Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed code changes. The purpose of this memo is to review what agritourism uses are currently permitted in Skagit County Code and how the Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed code changes will change those allowances.

### Current Agritourism

The Agricultural Advisory Board's recommended code changes would not change any allowances for farm stands. Seasonal farm stands under 300 square feet would continue to be permitted outright. Farm Stands over 300 square feet would be required to have an administrative special use permit or a hearing examiners permit, this does not change with the Agricultural Advisory Board's proposal. The requirement for a seasonal roadside stand is that a majority of the agricultural products must be grown on-site or be a product of the primary agricultural operation in Skagit County and that would not be changed.

The Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed changes do not change the code allowances for u-pick, farm animal or horticultural viewing by the public or activities associated with tourism which promote local agriculture; provided that adequate parking and specified ingress and egress are designated and permitted.

Skagit County Code allows for a wide range of uses (permitted outright and available via special use permits) that are intended to help supplement farm income aside from growing crops and raising meat. For example, farm-based businesses are permitted outright in the Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL) zone. A farm-based business is defined as an on-farm commercial enterprise devoted to the direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value-added and soil-dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site. Farm-based businesses are intended to supplement farm income, improve the efficiency of farming,

and provide employment to farm family members. Farm-based businesses are separate and distinct from agriculture support services, per SCC 14.04.020. The Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed code changes would not change any of the code allowances for Farm Based Businesses, although the Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed definitions to agricultural accessory use and agritourism would apply to any proposed use.

Temporary events are defined as commercial use of a property for any musical, cultural, or social event held either indoors or out of doors, per SCC 14.04.020. Temporary events in the Ag-NRL zone are an allowed use with an administrative special use permit provided the events are related to agricultural production, no agricultural land is converted, and no permanent structures are constructed. The limiting factor with temporary events is however, that there can be no more than 24 per year. The Agricultural Advisory Board has proposed to reduce the number of temporary events permitted to 12 events per year.

Wedding venues and event centers that are not connected to agriculture are not a permitted use in Ag-NRL. While some event venues have been permitted by an administrative special use permit, this use is not permitted in the Ag-NRL zone. The proposed code changes by the Agricultural Advisory Board would continue the prohibition of weddings and event venues that do not have a connection to agriculture.

Home-based businesses are permitted outright in the Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL) zone. A home-based business is defined as home occupations that remain incidental to the use of residence for general dwelling purposes and are compatible with rural character. Three categories of home-based businesses are home based business 1, home based business 2, and home-based business 3. Home based business 1 is permitted outright and does not allow the public or clients to be on-site. Home-based business 2 and 3 allow for employees and clients on-site but requires an administrative special use permit or hearing examiner permit. The Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed code changes would not change the allowances for home-based businesses in Ag-NRL, although the Agricultural Advisory Board's definition of accessory use and agritourism would apply to any proposed use.

## **Next Steps**

At the hearing on July 25, 2023 the Planning Commission will hear comments about the Agricultural Advisory Board's proposed code changes. The comments on the proposal will be presented by Staff to the Planning Commission tentatively on September 26, 2025. The proposed policy may be amended or changed during deliberations, which are tentatively scheduled for October 10, 2023. The Planning Commission's recommendation will then go to the Board of County Commissioners who will have the final say and may modify or amend the proposal or accept or reject it at that time. In summary, the process of formulating the policy has not been finalized or adopted. See the table below for tentative dates and schedule.

Meeting Date	Topic Area
April 25, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
June 13, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
July 25, 2023	Public Hearing on Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
September 26, 2023	Review of Public Comments on Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
October 10, 2023	Planning Commission Deliberations on Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations

See below for more information:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/departments/planningandpermit/agtourismmain.htm>

### **SEPA Threshold Determination**

The Skagit County SEPA Responsible Official has issued a Determination of Non-Significance for this non-project legislative proposal.

### **Public Comment**

**Option 1:** Email comments are preferred and must be sent to [pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us) with the proposal name “[Subject]” in the subject line. Please include your comments in the body of your email message rather than as attachments.

**Option 2:** Paper comments must be printed on 8½x11 paper and mailed or delivered to:

Planning and Development Services  
 Comments on “[Subject]”  
 1800 Continental Place  
 Mount Vernon WA 98273

All comments must be received by Thursday, July 27, 2023, 4:30 p.m. and include your full name and mailing address. Comments not meeting these requirements will not be considered.

**Option 3:** You may also comment in person. The Planning Commission is hosting the public hearing in the Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

If you wish to provide testimony via the online meeting option, please send an email to [pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us), with your name, phone number, and include a request to be added to the speakers list in the body of the email. All requests must be received 24 hours prior to the Public Hearing Date referenced above. Public hearing testimony is usually limited to three minutes, so written comments are preferred.

Anyone who plans to attend the public hearing and has special needs or disabilities should contact Planning and Development Services at (360) 416-1320 at least 96 hours before the hearing to discuss and arrange any special accommodations.