

Skagit County Planning Commission
Workshops: Update of Comp Plan Update; Overview of Public Participation
Program; Presentation of New Climate Element
January 23, 2024

Planning

Commissioners: **Kathy Mitchell**
 Vince Henley
 Angela Day
 Amy Hughes (via Zoom)
 Tim Raschko, Chair
 Joe Woodmansee
 Tammy Candler, Vice Chair (absent)
 Martha Rose
 Jen Hutchison

Staff: **Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner**

Others: **David Strich, WSDOT**

Chair Tim Raschko: (gavel) Good evening. Welcome to the January 23rd, 2024, meeting of the Skagit County Planning Commission. Let's see, we are missing Commissioner Candler, and Commissioner Hughes is on Zoom. So good evening, Amy. I'd entertain a motion to approve the minutes from our last meeting.

Commissioner Vince Henley: I so move.

Commissioner Kathy Mitchell: Second.

Chair Raschko: It's moved and seconded to approve the minutes. Is there any discussion on the minutes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: If not, all those in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So the minutes are approved. We have tonight a new member of our commission. Angela Day, welcome, and would you like to say a few words about yourself?

Angela Day: Sure. Thank you, Tim. Are the microphones working? Do I need to push an on button?

Chair Raschko: You do not.

Commissioner Day: Okay. Well, thank you very much and I'm really glad to be here joining all of you. I guess I bring some experience, like everyone, as a citizen of the county and a regulated entity, a homeowner, someone who's very interested in the quality of life here. I love this place. So I bring that. I also – I understand some of the challenges of being in local government, I guess, as a professor teaching courses in public administration both at the University of Washington and at Northern Arizona University where I taught mostly online. So I understand those challenges and I understand also that people sometimes feel frustrated with local government. And so my hope is to fulfill the role that I think is what we're asked to do, which is to take the community input and consider that in our advice and analysis to the Commissioners, and to lend voice to all the stakeholders in this community and provide that input path for people to contribute to how their government works. I take that role very seriously and I look forward to serving everyone in the community and to serving with my fellow commissioners.

Chair Raschko: Well, thank you and welcome,

Commissioner Day: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Are there any questions for Commissioner Day?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: No. Okay. I'm sure we'll get to know you very well.

Commissioner Martha Rose: As long as you don't grade our papers we're good, right?

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: We'll turn to Public Remarks. Anybody here can address the Planning Commission if they so wish. We have no deliberations, there's no public hearing, so any topic is fair game. It'd be limited to three minutes. And do we have any interest?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: No? Is there anybody online who wishes to address the Commission?

Robby Eckroth: We do have David Strich from Washington Department of Transportation. I don't know if David wanted to say anything or not. Other than that, there's no members from the public.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, thank you.

Mr. Eckroth: Oh, it looks like we have David popping up here.

David Strich: I just wanted to say hi. No, it's my first Planning Commission meeting. I'm new with WSDOT, new as of last April, so I'm hoping to be monitoring and being a part of joining you all in the upcoming year as the Comprehensive Plan process is underway. So thanks for having me, and I'm just going to monitor and be around. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Okay, we'll turn now to our Workshop and Overview of the Public Participation Program for the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Eckroth?

(brief incomprehensible discussion about meeting topics)

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you, Chair. So, yeah, our first workshop item is just an update on the Comprehensive Plan Update. I just want to let you all know what's been going on behind the scenes just because we haven't provided an update for a little while.

So the County now has a contract with a large consultant team, which consists of a primary consultant and sub-consultants that are going to help us with the Comprehensive Plan Update. The County has been approved for two separate grants to help with it – pay for those consultants – which we're very thankful for. One is for the overall Comprehensive Plan Update and then the other is for the Climate Change Element. We still haven't received money or final contracts from Commerce yet, but we were hoping to get that in the next few weeks. But we have been approved for those.

In mid-February our Skagit County team that will be working on the Comprehensive Plan Update will be meeting with our consultants just to kick off the whole process. And I just want to let you all know I've met with several Skagit County departments, including Public Health and the Department of Emergency Management, as we'll be working with them closely on the Housing and Climate Element Updates.

And then the last note I want to help transition to the next topic: I've developed a draft public participation program and a preliminary schedule that will help guide the process of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

So that's all I had. I'm available for questions if you have any.

Chair Raschko: Are there questions?

Commissioner Rose: I have just a curiosity about the consultants. Are they local? Are they state? Are they city? Seattle or, you know, where are they from?

Mr. Eckroth: Sure.

Commissioner Rose: And who are they?

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, so it's primarily Seattle area. I believe one is more local, if I remember correctly – DCD Watershed's going to be doing our critical areas update. But I think everyone else is from the greater Seattle area.

Commissioner Rose: Okay. All right, thank you.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah.

Commissioner Henley: Are you going to go down through the timeline at all?

Mr. Eckroth: We can do that when we go over the public participation program because that includes the preliminary schedule; however, it's very preliminary and once we have that kickoff meeting with the consultants – who are really going to be – it's really based on their timeframes – we'll have a much better idea of what the next few months are going to look like for the rest of the year.

Commissioner Henley: But basically have about a year-and-a-half to work on this, or something like that, right?

Mr. Eckroth: Yes. Yes, we do; however, there is a bill in the state senate right now that might extend our deadline to December, which would be consistent with the 2024 jurisdictions that are currently going through their update process.

Commissioner Henley: Thank you.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah.

Chair Raschko: Any other questions?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Thank you. So maybe now we'll do the Workshop Overview of the Public Participation Program.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: You're welcome.

Mr. Eckroth: So the Growth Management Act requires local governments to establish a public participation program that ensures early and continuous public participation in the development and amendments of the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations. The program is to be used by staff to guide public engagement and to help the public know how to engage in the planning process. And just to give you an idea of what the plan consists of: So it outlines our public participation goals; a preliminary schedule; a summary of the legislative process; communication tools that will be used; outreach methods; and who we've identified as our key audiences.

So the plan is a living document and will expand and continue to be refined as the Comprehensive Plan update continues. But no action is required by the Planning Commission on this item as it's not a development regulation or a Comprehensive Plan update; however, staff wanted to inform the commission about the plan and see if the commission had any individual comments or suggestions. After we receive comments from the commission, we will be bringing this to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration.

So I don't know if you all had a chance to look at the plan, but if you did please let me know if you have any suggestions. I'll watch the video of this meeting later and try to implement those suggestions.

Chair Raschko: So I wasn't really prepared to do that tonight, so –

Mr. Eckroth: My apologies!

Chair Raschko: I guess what you're looking for then for everybody to carefully read this and present their suggestions when?

Mr. Eckroth: My apologies for not making that clear in the agenda. I was hoping for tonight; however, we can wait until the following meeting, if you would like. Or – I guess we can't really –

we need to have this in a public setting. Sorry. I'm just thinking out loud right now. I suppose this meeting is probably – we have to get this passed soon to start our process so I think this meeting is probably the appropriate setting to do that. My apologies for the short notice.

Commissioner Henley: Quick question.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah?

Commissioner Henley: This input that we're supposed to give on the Comprehensive Plan, does that include an integration of the climate change part of that as well?

Mr. Eckroth: Do you mind repeating that one more time?

Commissioner Henley: You've got the Comprehensive Plan that you've asked us for some input on, okay, and we're not prepared to do that tonight, but we might be prepared to do it in the following meeting.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure.

Commissioner Henley: The question is, Do you also need us to conclude this part of it –

Mr. Eckroth: No.

Commissioner Henley: – and this part of it for the next meeting?

Mr. Eckroth: No. No, so these are two separate agenda items. The Public Participation Program is just our program that we provide to the public and that we use as staff to guide us with our public participation. It's completely separate from the Climate element other than it will help guide us facilitate public participation for the Climate element.

Commissioner Henley: So it's bound to have an impact. I mean, there's –

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, absolutely.

Commissioner Henley: – no getting around that.

Mr. Eckroth: Yes, yes it will. And what we can do is if we need this to the Board, like I said, this is a living document so we can make changes as we go through the process. And I'm including that in the resolution that I'm going to be proposing to the Board to pass – to state that it will be living.

Chair Raschko: Yes? Go ahead, please.

Commissioner Mitchell: I *did* read what you sent out, and nothing jumped out as being off base or missing in general. It looked like it was a decent outline to get going with. And, like you said, this is a preliminary preliminary. You've listed the stakeholders and those kinds of things. I think you got your bases covered for this stage.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you, Commissioner.

Chair Raschko: So is the next meeting – are you saying that’s a little too late and it puts us behind a little bit?

Mr. Eckroth: Well, because we’re going to be starting the process of the Comprehensive Plan update, I think we *can* fit it into the next meeting now that I’m thinking about our timeline here. So I’ll give you more time to consider that, if that’s what the commission would be most comfortable with.

Chair Raschko: One alternative is to just go through the whole thing right now, but I don’t think that would work as well because we really don’t have time to think about the thing and then it’d be a rushed process, I think.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure. Sure. Sure, so we can just hold another workshop. Again, the Planning Commission does not need to issue a recommendation on this. It’s more just – I was just soliciting feedback and wanted to let you know that this plan is going to be available soon.

Chair Raschko: I have to confess that I’m locked out of my email now. That happens to me regularly –

Mr. Eckroth: Okay.

Chair Raschko: – with Gmail. So this is the only thing I had and when it said that no action’s required on this item, we’ll take action on this at a later date – so I totally missed the intent there.

Mr. Eckroth: Okay, my apologies.

Chair Raschko: Well, sorry. Go ahead, please.

Commissioner Day: Thank you. I found one of the most helpful parts of the document to be the timeline to outline exactly when things are going to happen and when you’ll be consulting with stakeholders and sort of the target dates. But I guess a question is: Is this based on the current plan? Is that based on past experience or – how was that developed? Is it, like, best practices from other jurisdictions? Or can you give us a little background about how you came to develop it?

Mr. Eckroth: So it’s a combination of both. I looked back at our 2016 Update and then I looked at several jurisdictions to see what their timeline is. And, again, because we – our consultants are going to be so heavily involved I will probably be revising this to work around their schedules, because they’re going to be producing a lot of the work – of course with our oversight and feedback and the Commission’s.

Commissioner Day: Thank you. I guess the only suggestion I would have is, you know, the earlier you consult with stakeholders probably the better – would keep you better on time than consulting later. So whatever that looks like, and if that’s a helpful contribution or suggestion, that’s what I would recommend.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you. Yeah, and that’s a great suggestion. That’s also something that’s encouraged in the Growth Management Act as well, so that’s an excellent point.

Chair Raschko: Jen?

Commissioner Jen Hutchison: Thank you. When I reviewed it, it appeared to me that you had all the bases covered as far as media outlets and ways to inform the community of how to engage, so it looked pretty complete as far as I could tell.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Anybody else?

Commissioner Henley: I have a question about the surveys. We've had some experience in the past with surveys. So I would ask that at least we try to inject *some* scientific methodology into the survey in terms of, you know, the sample size and the sample makeup and things like that, rather than just take, you know, all and sundry that comes through the door. We need to be able to make a projection from what we've gotten measured in the survey, and if we can't do that then it's not worth much.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Everybody's good?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Eckroth: All right.

Chair Raschko: So everybody will go through this more carefully between now and our next meeting and give a little bit more suggestions if there are any.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: All right. So we have another workshop or presentation on the New Climate Element.

Mr. Eckroth: All right. Thank you, Chair. So this presentation will go over the new climate planning law that Washington State adopted by passing House Bill 1181 last year. This law will require Skagit County to develop a Climate element as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. And the purpose of this presentation is to inform the Planning Commission of the requirements of this element so you have some knowledge going into the Comprehensive Plan update process.

So all cities and counties that are planning under the Growth Management Act are required to update their comprehensive plan every 10 years per the state's schedule. Skagit County and then all of the green counties here that you can see up on our map are required to update their comprehensive plan by June 30th, 2025. And, as I mentioned earlier, that *could* be extended to December 2025, pending state legislation.

So climate planning is a new goal of the Growth Management Act. The new law requires a climate resilience sub-element for all jurisdictions that are planning under the Growth Management Act, and a greenhouse gas emission reduction sub-element is required for 11 counties that meet certain criteria under the Growth Management Act and their cities with populations with over 6,000 people. Skagit County is one of 11 counties that are required to have a greenhouse gas emission sub-element, and counties with a 2025 Comprehensive Plan due date will be the first jurisdictions

required to develop a climate element. However, a lot of the 2024 jurisdictions, such as Snohomish County, King, and Pierce, I believe are all doing it anyway just to get ahead.

So the new goal ensures that comprehensive plans and development regulations mitigate the effects of climate change; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles travelled; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.

Commissioner Henley: Is there a definition for “environmental justice”?

Mr. Eckroth: I don’t know if the state has one necessarily, but my understanding of it is when we develop the climate element, those who may be disproportionately impacted by climate change-related natural hazards, I believe are not supposed to be negatively impacted more than maybe other people may while we do this update.

Commissioner Henley: Okay. I’m not sure how you do that, but okay.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure, sure. It will be a challenge. So I’m going to get into the greenhouse gas emissions reduction sub-element first and then we’ll go into the climate resiliency sub-element after that.

So the definition of “greenhouse gas emissions mitigation” that the state is using is “actions taken to reduce or eliminate the greenhouse gases in order to reduce the rate and extent of climate change damage.” So the graph on the right here is the Department of Ecology’s statewide emissions inventory from 2019. As you can see here, transportation accounts for 39% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the state. Residential and industrial and commercial heating account for 25%. Electricity is 21%. And then 14% accounts for everything else. So in developing our climate change element, we will have to look into all those different sectors, especially transportation, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

So the Department of Commerce provides four different pathways to reduce greenhouse gas emission sources and achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions. So Pathway 1 allows for the development of goals and policies to reduce greenhouse gases from a menu of climate measures that the Department of Commerce has developed. What I mean by a “menu of climate measures” is essentially Commerce is providing a list of different goals and policies that we can pick from if we decide or determine that they are applicable to the county.

Pathway 2 allows for a greenhouse gas estimate based on a framework and survey developed by the Department of Ecology called the Eight Questions to Guide a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Estimate. These questions are based around electricity use, transportation profile, waste generation, and emissions from industrial facilities and agricultural activities.

Pathway 3 establishes a baseline of vehicle miles travel conditions. This pathway helps evaluate strategies in transportation, projects that would reduce vehicle miles travelled and establish targets and measures for vehicle miles travelled reduction. The Washington Department of Transportation is planning to provide vehicle miles travel data to help jurisdictions with reduction at some point this year. So we’re looking forward to getting that data.

Pathway 4 is a greenhouse gas emissions inventory which requires accounting for all jurisdictions’ emissions sources and amounts. Once all emission sources are identified the jurisdiction sets reduction targets.

So Pathways 1 and 2 are a little less resource-intensive as they don't require specific data, but the pathways that the County chooses will be determined as we move through the process and dependent on time and resources.

So this is an example of what Snohomish County has been prioritizing in their goals and policies. This is something that I saw in a presentation that they gave, I believe, earlier last year. So some of those goals and policies consist of decarbonizing County facilities and fleets; supporting expansion of electrical vehicle infrastructure; improving County's multimodal access to school, social services, grocery, medical, dental, and other community or neighborhood services; enhancing tree canopy, wetlands, estuaries, and forested areas; and coordinating with special purpose districts to help meet regional and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

So next I'm going to move into the Resilience sub-element. So the state definition of "climate resilience" is "the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities."

So in other words, climate resilience is a community's capacity to recover from natural resources that are increased in intensity or frequency due to a changing climate. So this could include stronger storms that bring stronger floods and increase flood events; increased number of wildfires; sea level rise; drought, which can impact our water resources and agricultural and food systems; or extreme heat events.

So this is the steps that the Department of Commerce has provided in their guidance to jurisdictions, and I'm going to go over each of those steps in a little bit more detail.

So for the first step toward drafting a climate resilience element, the Department of Commerce has recommended that jurisdictions use this UW climate mapping for a resilient Washington webtool. This map is used to develop an understanding of how climate change is going to impact the county over a selected period of time by allowing the user to select a specific hazardous sector. The Department of Commerce has identified 11 sectors that could be impacted by climate hazards. These sectors include agricultural and food systems; building and energy; cultural resources; economic development; transportation; emergency management; health and well-being; ecosystems; waste management; water resources; and zoning and development.

Another part of Step 1 is to identify community assets that are at risk from climate hazards. Assets can include natural resources, agriculture and food systems, infrastructure, community groups, specific places, and services. Once the hazards and assets are identified, we will need to pair them and describe their exposures and the consequences if one of those assets were to be damaged or destroyed by a climate hazard.

Step 2, we'll have the County audit our existing plans and policies to identify policy gaps and opportunities to address local climate hazards and impacts. We will audit our existing Comprehensive Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any other related plans during this process. Both Skagit County plans – the Comprehensive Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan – don't really address climate hazards so those policy gaps are pretty wide, so when it comes to climate resiliency, let's say we're kind of starting from scratch.

Commissioner Henley: Question.

Mr. Eckroth: Yes, Commissioner?

Commissioner Henley: Looking at the step 2 audit plans and policies, as I understand it, are not the flood maps out of date here in Skagit County?

Mr. Eckroth: I believe we are using 1980s data. I'm not really sure exactly where we are at with that and how that might fit into the plans _____.

Commissioner Henley: It seems to me that you'd want to have the very best and latest data, all right, when you're dealing with things like flood control, for example, and dike maintenance and so on.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure. Sure, sure.

Commissioner Henley: Okay.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you. So after the audit, Skagit County will perform a vulnerability and risk assessment. Through this process, the County will assess the probability and magnitude of impacts to the County's assets that are at the biggest risk and then we'll assess the adaptive capacity of those assets. The Department of Commerce recommends using the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit framework to assist with this step. And that framework is used as these steps to resilience, as you can see in this graphic here.

So Step 4 allows the County to choose one or a combination of pathways to select goals and policies to address relevant climate hazards and impacts. The County will either be developing new goals and policies or updating our existing hazard mitigation planning and adopting it by reference. The Skagit County Department of Emergency Management has also been tasked to update their hazard mitigation plan for climate-related hazards. I believe it's a FEMA requirement. So Planning and Development Services and Emergency Management will be working closely together throughout the process to share information and make sure that we aren't duplicating efforts, and to make sure that our plans are consistent.

Commissioner Mitchell: I have a question.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah?

Commissioner Mitchell: So since the DEM usually does the hazard stuff anyway, and in a big way, and they put all the tsunami stuff in with the modeling and things like that in the region the last couple of years, do you know if that information for the tsunami stuff that the DEM has incorporated, is that all just modeling or do they have any historical data?

Mr. Eckroth: That's a good question and I'm not sure, but I can try to look into that and see if I can get you an answer via email, if it's okay with you.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you. So what we're hearing you say otherwise is we wouldn't want to duplicate what DEM's already doing. Since they've already put the resources into a lot of stuff, we should be able to incorporate, like we did with some shoreline stuff.

Mr. Eckroth: I think parts of it we might be able to, but because *they* don't address climate resiliency in their plan, *they* have to update it as well. So we both have to update to address this.

Commissioner Mitchell: So it can't be a one or the other and share?

Mr. Eckroth: We can. The state does allow you to adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan by reference as long as it meets all the state requirements. So that's something that we'll have to discuss to see what the feasibility is. But that would be my hope is that we could do that. It makes a lot of sense to me personally.

Commissioner Mitchell: Right, especially not duplicating everything, which you've already indicated.

Mr. Eckroth: Right, right. So if we have a specific climate resiliency chapter in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, for instance, and it identifies all those hazards then I'm pretty sure we could easily adopt that by reference.

Commissioner Mitchell: Super. Thank you.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, thank you. So Step 5, which is the last step, is to implement one goal and supportive policy for each climate-exacerbated hazard that's relevant to Skagit County. And these goals and policies are required to align with FEMA and new state law requirements. And the Climate element can either be a single chapter or it can be tied into our existing Comprehensive Plan elements.

And this is an example of goals and policies at Port Angeles, which is one of the state's pilot cities for the new climate planning law – has adopted in their comprehensive plan. So this is just one of their goals, which is to protect and enhance the area's unique physical features; its natural, historical, archaeological and cultural amenities; and the overall environment. And then there's three policies to support that goal, which are:

- To protect infrastructure along waterfronts, including roads, pedestrian paths, bikeways, and structures.
- Policy 2 is to evaluate risks of future building on coastal bluffs for sea level rise impacts.
- And then Policy 3 is to review all new development for climate change impacts and adaptation to sea level rise through the SEPA process.

And that's it for my summary of the new climate law. Again, I was just hoping to give you all an idea of what's to come. But I am available for questions. I'll do my best to answer them. I might not have the answers at this moment as there's a lot of information that the state's providing. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Have we any –

Commissioner Day: Thank you. I have a couple of questions about the first part, the greenhouse gas reduction. The resilience seems a little bit easier for me to wrap my head around in terms of land use regulations, but it's the greenhouse gas reduction part that I have some questions about.

So my understanding is when you adopt new policies eventually those underpin future land use regulations. You know, insulation standards for homes and, you know, where you can place homes and that sort of thing. Can you give us a way to wrap our head around how these policy goals might later at some point translate into regulations?

Mr. Eckroth: Sure. So there's a few different ways that it could. One that comes to mind: The state's really emphasizing that we reduce vehicle miles travelled, which sounds very challenging for a county like Skagit, which doesn't have a lot of transit infrastructure. But I think if as – if we

have impact fees or if there are improvements required for certain projects, then that could result in some multimodal transportation improvements. It's not all development regulations, though. It's stuff that the County can do themselves and then we can work with some of our special purpose districts – Skagit Transit and other organizations in the county – to achieve this goal as well. So it's not all development but, yeah, some of it probably will be. And I don't have anything else off the top of my head other than we may be able to adopt goals and policies that reference the energy code. We could provide some incentives where if homes decide to become even – or builders decide to build even more energy-efficient than what's required, then maybe there's an incentive program we could have. So that's just some ideas that come off the top of my head (that) we're not necessarily going to implement but I think I've heard of other jurisdictions deciding to use.

Commissioner Day: I have another question –

Chair Raschko: Go ahead, please.

Commissioner Day: – if I'm able. I guess I share an interest in data and science with my fellow commissioner, Vince, so I looked at the Washington State Department of Ecology's greenhouse inventory from 2019. I was looking back – I'm not sure if you can put that chart back up. It's the circle that shows the percentage of all the greenhouse gas emissions. Yes, that one – just to try to get my head around what are the quantities that we're talking about. So in looking at that, for 2019 it was 102 million metric tons of carbon emissions. 2018, in comparison, was 95 and 2017 was 95.3. Slightly less. So it says in 2019 the statewide share of emissions dropped from 44% in 2018 to 39%, which is the transportation part that you have up there. But emissions from electricity generation grew almost 33% from 2018 to 2019. The greatest contribution to the 2018/2019 emissions was the mix of fuels used in generating electricity. So I think it – you know, if we're looking at reducing emissions through electric vehicles, say – I think that was one of the things that was proposed, is that, you know, County vehicles would become electric to reduce emissions – I think that the County should – would do well to look at the entire life cycle of the emissions. In other words, where the electricity comes from. Because we can't just count part of it. Is that something that would be considered, do you think?

Mr. Eckroth: It's something that we can discuss with the County Commissioners as we go through the process, as it of course implies some budget amendments. We would have to budget for that. But, yeah, that's something I'm sure will come up through the process.

Commissioner Day: I have a couple more things, if I may. So in looking at the total emissions, transportation – again, according to your chart – was 40 million metric tons. Residential, commercial, and industrial heating was 25 million metric tons, electricity generation 21 million metric tons, and Other was 14 million metric tons – which includes agriculture, which I found was interesting.

So then I was curious: For Skagit County, you know, what's our share of the statewide emissions? And I couldn't find anything for 2019 but I did find on the County's website a base year of 2006. So roughly 15 years prior, operations from municipal – or emissions from municipal operations were 11,000 tons of CO₂. It's very minor. So if we're looking at reducing emissions from the municipal operations, that's great, but it's very minor compared to everything else. So I just was – again, in the interest of trying to sort of wrap my head around this, what this would look like. So on the website it says the “community,” which I think means everybody's home and business, emitted approximately 1.69 million tons – of CO₂. So 1.6 million tons in an overall statewide

measurement of 102. So we're not a very big percentage of the statewide emissions. That's how I would look at it.

So another interesting thought was: How much does the oil refinery at March Point emit in terms of CO₂? So I looked at EPA's website and I noticed that you can adjust it by year, so I looked at 2019 just as an equivalent. And their emissions are 16.6 million metric tons. And so I don't know if that is even included in the Department of Ecology's total emissions, because we also have an emitter at Cherry Point. And if you look at the nationwide map of emissions from oil refineries, we have two very large emitters in our state. And so I guess the question is and, you know, it goes back to the thought of environmental justice, which is a great question to ask is how it's defined. But one question that I would ask in terms of justice is if everyday citizens are bearing the cost as taxpayers and, you know, home builders, residents of this county, reducing – making a very small reduction in our emissions in the grand scheme of things, and yet we have one industry in the county that's emitting, you know, 10 or 15 times the amount as the whole rest of the community, I think that could receive some pushback from citizens in the county. It's just something to be aware of as the county seeks to adopt some of these policy goals.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you, Commissioner. Anything else?

Commissioner Day: No. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you.

Commissioner Mitchell: Very interesting information. Thank you. And if we're supposed to look at all this all the way around and look at it realistically and scientifically, then shouldn't part of the equation be certainly green foliage like trees and bushes which we've got a plethora of – more than the eastern half of the state, for instance – that counteracts that by turning that CO₂ back into O₂ by huge volumes, shouldn't that be part of the equation too?

Mr. Eckroth: It is. Absolutely. Yeah.

Commissioner Mitchell: Right. So it ends up getting pretty heavy when we're looking at all these numbers and we get this unfunded mandate from the, you know, state to do something that is so nebulous and so amoeba-like from place to place, time to time, situation to situation, it makes it very difficult. And I really feel sorry for you guys having to take the brunt of the challenge, especially when they start you off with old data. Are we supposed to – do we *have* access to current data?

Mr. Eckroth: Not at the moment. I did mention the Department of Transportation is going to be providing vehicle miles travel data, which is a big part of the equation.

Commissioner Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Eckroth: So that should be helpful. As far as county-specific industries other than the refinery, I don't know if we have any specific data on that.

Chair Raschko: Vince?

Commissioner Henley: Aren't we sort of missing the elephant in the room? I mean, the reality is you could drop the emissions for the state of Washington to zero and your global impact on greenhouse gas emissions, all right, would hardly change at all. I mean, and if you expanded that

– and let's just take for a second the whole continental United States. If you dropped the emissions from the entire continental United States to zero, again, when you compare emerging economies like India and China, which are *not* restricting any greenhouse gases, you again don't have a strong impact even though you've probably now pretty much wrecked your economy. So you need to think about things like this. I mean, as I said, it's the elephant in the room and nobody wants to talk about it.

Chair Raschko: Well, I would – I 'd agree with that and one thought I had when you're going through this is that – and maybe I don't remember correctly what the example used was, but something like fees for developers to offset the cost of reducing average mileage by getting more public transportation infrastructure. Something like that. And I have to agree with what Commissioner Day said in that you need to look at a bigger picture because one of the worst problems we have in this county is affordable housing. I mean, we have employers that can't come here because there's nowhere for workers to live, and yet we would heap more costs on the development, driving the cost of housing up. So, you know, all the things that can be done here can't be done in a vacuum because everything's interrelated. I mean, you've got to look at how doing one thing is going to impact a lot of other things. You know, for instance, I think there's passed along the state that no housing in the future can be heated with natural gas. Am I right on that?

(several inaudible/incomprehensible comments from several Commissioners)

Commissioner Mitchell: It was a state law today that they announced and it was for – I could be wrong, but I think it was for buildings. New buildings, is what it said.

Commissioner Henley: New construction.

Commissioner Mitchell: New construction.

Chair Raschko: New construction. Okay.

Commissioner Hutchison: It did pass in the state. I thought there was a lawsuit.

Chair Raschko: But, you know, has anybody thought about where all the electric power to heat it is going to come from and how much coal is going to be burned to produce that and all this?

Commissioner Henley: _____ needs to be generated someplace by something and nothing is completely pollution-free.

Chair Raschko: So, you know, I don't necessarily disagree with the concept. I just think that all these things can't be looked at in a vacuum and the whole bigger picture's got to be taken into account. Has anybody else anything?

Mr. Eckroth: I will, if you don't mind. I was just going to say at the meeting with Puget Sound Energy related to battery energy storage systems lately with some other people and the Planning and Development Services Department. And they've been explained to us that they've been mandated by the state to also transition to more clean energy as their energy supplier, so they're also having to figure out how to grasp that as well.

Commissioner Mitchell: So they're asking for miracles.

Mr. Eckroth: Well, I do know that battery energy storage systems seem to be a big part of the solution for them.

Commissioner Henley: You also have to look at the whole life cycle because there's a life cycle that starts way back during design and construction, all right? And then disposal, all right, when the end of the life of the battery becomes. It's the same with wind power. We don't have a good way of disposing of, you know, damaged wind turbine blades right now. I mean, it's a big problem.

Commissioner Rose: It's – I have one small comment, which is there's a lot of resistance to radical transformation. If nobody does anything, it's just going to keep getting worse so somebody has to do *something* somewhere somehow. Any rate, the lowest hanging fruit, in my mind, is the new construction. I'm not talking about gas or no gas. I'm talking about it's easy and relatively cheap to add more insulation and to make the homes even more energy-efficient. And that's what we do and it's not that bad. You give up some fluff for some hardcore insulation, give up some things like granite countertops and spend it on insulation and you're there for the same price. So I think that it requires a different mindset and, you know, the technology's evolving at such a fast rate. And just an example is back in '08 I set about as a builder to try to get down to net zero on my houses and all of a sudden in 2000 and – well, five years ago we're at a negative 13, meaning that we produced more electricity than what's needed, and yet without changing anything about how we build. So how did that happen? Well, the way it happened is with all the equipment that goes into the homes. The efficiencies of all the equipment, if you choose the right equipment, has gotten so much better that – and then the next two houses were a negative 25 without – again, without – about the same size house, same building strategy – without doing *anything*.

So everything in the world is changing rapidly with regards to addressing this whole thing. And there's going to be new types of batteries, they've figured out ways to recycle the batteries. I don't know what they all are, but I do – it is my ___. I read about this stuff all the time. And there's a lot of people that are real excited about these new developing and emerging technologies. About eight years ago I went to the International Builders Show and there was a house there that Department of Energy developed. The walls were one-inch thick and they were an R30. And so is it out in the marketplace? No. You know what I'm saying? There were windows that were double-paned with almost no space and they were an R20, and they're not out in the marketplace either. But the point is is that there's all of these people working behind the scenes in all these companies developing this stuff. So I guess I'd rather see people adopt a can-do attitude instead of a why-should-we attitude. That's all I have to say.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead.

Commissioner Day: Well, I appreciate that and I agree with that. We have to start somewhere and, you know, using new things that become available are low-hanging fruit. And you're right: The reductions that we can make, we can make them and if it takes into consideration, like Vince was saying, the entire life cycle of the unit of energy produced, you know, we should certainly adopt those things. You know, that's a plus. I guess a question that I have, too, regarding incorporating this climate mandate into the policies in the Comprehensive Plan, I think you referenced the House Bill that mandates that. And I'm not sure – I might have missed it in the handout that was sent out. Is that in there, the exact language from the House Bill?

Mr. Eckroth: I included a hyperlink but, no, I didn't provide it in the materials.

Commissioner Day: Okay. Yeah, that would be interesting to know, you know, how much flexibility there is for local jurisdictions to determine what's right for them and how much is – you know, there's no flexibility. I think that would be helpful probably for this county.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, and my interpretation is there is a bit of flexibility but there are requirements that you have to meet that Commerce is looking for.

Commissioner Mitchell: And we're also one of the first counties to go.

Mr. Eckroth: We are. We are.

Commissioner Mitchell: So we're guinea pigs.

Commissioner Day: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Anything else?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: All right. Well, thank you.

Mr. Eckroth: Thank you, Commissioners.

Commissioner Mitchell: Oh, one more request, Robby. While you're looking these things up, if you do run across information that's helpful – I don't know if the other kids want it or not, but I'd like to see things – just keep sending them anyway.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure.

Commissioner Mitchell: Through email, if you don't mind.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, I can do that.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Okay. That takes us to the Director's Update. So will that be you as well, Robby?

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah. Unfortunately, Director Jack Moore was not able to make it today. I'm not sure if he's going to be able to make the next meeting either. I don't have a whole lot of updates, other than our next meeting I'm going to have a similar presentation to go over the housing update, because that is also a major change compared to what we're used to. Just to give you a quick summary: So now the state is requiring that counties and cities plan for different income segments. And essentially what that's going to mean is – I think it's really going to impact the cities more than the county, but the county does have to plan for it and it's something that the entire county and all of the jurisdictions have to work together on when we go through this process. But I think the cities are really going to have to start building more multifamily as a result of that. But I'll go into more detail in the presentation at the next meeting.

Commissioner Mitchell: So are you – I guess the county has to be involved. You're saying, obviously, the cities are more impacted. Is it just our UGAs or does it mean the whole literal county?

Mr. Eckroth: So it's the entire county and it's broken down into different income segments and then each jurisdiction has to take a certain share of that income segment, and then their urban growth areas have to take a certain segment and then the rural areas have to take a certain segment. The rural areas really can't take a lot of low income housing just because of other rules in the Growth Management Act. Because of the rural character or the Rural element and things like that, you can't have multifamily, which is really the only – usually the way to achieve affordable housing. There may be some programs that we can have to facilitate lower income housing in the rural areas to achieve some of those numbers, because we do have to take a little bit. But I'll get into more detail and have a prepared presentation for you.

Commissioner Mitchell: So the other question: When you do that for us, I'd like to be clear on what is when they're supposed to take and have to take versus forced to take. For instance, like the County's already planned for more ADUs and lightened things up to be able to do that, and they did that really well. So does that already count or do they get hit again?

Mr. Eckroth: We have to plan for future housing, so ADUs might be part of the solution. And as I think most of you know, the state is requiring that urban growth areas be able to provide two ADUs per lot, I believe, if there's capital facilities to support that – mostly sewer. So that would be part of the solution, but I think we're probably going to have to think of other solutions as well.

Commissioner Mitchell: Because part of that question is this about the forced thing: How can you force somebody on land in different places to do that? You just say, Tag you're it. You guys are – do you see what I'm getting at?

Mr. Eckroth: Oh, yeah. No, no, no, no. Sorry. I didn't quite understand your question there. So no, no one's going to be necessarily *forced* – individual property owners. But if someone does own property in a city they may have to do multifamily housing rather than single-family as part of this update, with the zoning that results from the update.

Commissioner Mitchell: Do you see that as being *all* zoning absorbing this or selective zoning? Or has the County figured that out yet?

Mr. Eckroth: And again, the Cities are going to be taking the brunt of this. I see the Cities are going to have to at least account – they're going to have to have zoning to support some of those lower income ___. It's not going to be the entire city. But from a county level because we can only allow low density development, I don't think we're going to have to take a lot of that brunt.

Commissioner Mitchell: Great.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah.

Commissioner Mitchell: So you spell that out crystal clear to the public when it comes time.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure. Yes.

Commissioner Mitchell: That'll be really helpful.

Mr. Eckroth: Yes. That's my plan.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Joe?

Commissioner Joe Woodmansee: And you could see the County having to be more aggressive in urban growth boundaries for this to be accommodated. And just a reminder that it's one thing to mandate affordable housing; it's another thing to mandate codes that make it impossible. And we may go from granite to Formica to plywood counter tops before it's all said and done. So if there's no reform in the code side of things to go along with the mandate, you're never going to get to affordable housing.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure.

Commissioner Woodmansee: You can't – you know, you can't force it to happen if it's financially impossible, unless you're just going to start just subsidizing housing.

Mr. Eckroth: Right.

Commissioner Woodmansee: And I feel the same way about public transportation, you know. The only way that I see it gaining momentum in Skagit County is if you strangle the person's ability to drive their car, you know, which is you've got to go EV; you can only go so far; you know, fossil fuels are bad; natural gas is bad. And, you know, it's – I think there needs to be a little bit more of a happy medium down the road versus – you know, it has to be looked at comprehensively, right? I mean, even the whole concept of the greenhouse gas and everything. And, you know, we might make it a little bit better here – not much, it doesn't sound to me like – but at what cost somewhere else because of the batteries or whatever else we're bringing to here? So we have this – we feel good about what we did because we made a difference, but they're building 10 times more batteries wherever else in the world and, you know, there's zero participation in the greenhouse situation in these countries and they're basically out of control. You know, for us to – we can't catch up to what they're adding to the problem. I don't see, you know – I don't buy into the you-gotta-start-somewhere. I think you've got to have a good plan across the board, and just starting somewhere is, you know, a big burden on somebody trying to live in their housing and, you know, have their home. So, anyways, there's a ramble for you!

Chair Raschko: You done?

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yep.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you.

(some laughter)

Chair Raschko: Anybody else have anything for staff?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay, I just want to go over before we go into the next section here – we need to still review this document with Mount Baker on the cover – the Public Participation Program and Preliminary Schedule. Would it be helpful if everybody were to go through that this week and any suggested changes send them to you to compile?

Mr. Eckroth: Or what we can do, just to make sure it's in a public setting, is for us to discuss it at the next meeting and I can get individual contributions.

Chair Raschko: Well, that's what I'm getting at is that – but I've always found it easier to discuss something if we've seen it in advance.

Mr. Eckroth: Sure.

Chair Raschko: So if you could collect it all and then send it out and then we review it at the next meeting, we will have a chance to have seen what everybody has to present. Does that sound fair enough?

Commissioner Mitchell: No.

Chair Raschko: No?

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah, I'll make it easy for you – I don't have anything. So, yeah.

Chair Raschko: Okay, if we could do that by Friday, if you come up with anything. Would that be soon enough?

Mr. Eckroth: That sounds great.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thanks. Okay, we'll go to the Planning Commissioner Comments and Announcements. Which end should we start at? Do you want to start, Jen?

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you, Chair. I just want to welcome Angela. It's great to have you with your input.

Commissioner Day: Thank you.

Commissioner Rose: Yeah, it'll be fun having a teacher on the board!

(laughter)

Commissioner Rose: That's all I have.

Commissioner Henley: Well, welcome and I hope you are a very fast reader because you're going to need all the reading skills you can adopt.

Commissioner Day: Thank you for that! That's a good tip.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Welcome also. I have a feeling you *are* a very fast reader! And so that's a good thing. And I appreciate, you know, this is going to be a bit of a process and a huge education and information gathering and a lot of learned lessons, I'm sure, along the way. Kind of going into uncharted territory now going down this road. I know it's going to be a lot of hard work so in advance I appreciate all the hard work that's going to go into it from staff.

Chair Raschko: Do you have anything, Kathy?

Commissioner Mitchell: No, just thank you for the work that you're going to be doing on this. And if we can – just a couple housekeeping things. We've got – the agenda, we still have Knutzen on here. If we can update those. That's one piece we forget – keep forgetting to do.

Mr. Eckroth: You mean at the very top? Thanks.

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah. We appreciate that.

Chair Raschko: You can put Angela's name instead of his.

Mr. Eckroth: Yes.

Commissioner Mitchell: She gets new billing. I think she comes after Tammy now.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Have you anything, Angela?

Commissioner Day: No, just thank you and I look forward to working with all of you and to everybody in Skagit County who wants to participate and provide input. I look forward to that, yeah. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Great. Well, welcome. So that concludes our business for tonight, and if there's nothing else, we will stand adjourned (gavel).