

SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Planning Commission Special Meeting

August 20, 2024

6:00 PM – 7:08 PM

Please refer to transcript and video recording of the Planning Commission meeting for in-depth information about these meeting minutes. Meeting materials, the full transcript, meeting agenda, and referenced video recording of this meeting can be viewed at the Planning Commission Schedule and Agenda page:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningCommission/PCminutes.htm>

Summary of Meeting

Roll Call

Tim Raschko, (Chair): present

Tammy Candler, (Vice Chair): present

Amy Hughes: present*(Virtual)

Vincent Henley: absent

Kathy Mitchell: present

Martha Rose: present

Jen Hutchison: present

Joe Woodmansee: absent

Angela Day: present

The Planning Commission Chair Tim Raschko called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Remarks

Chair Raschko opened the public remarks section of the meeting and asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to address the Commission. Several public commenters highlighted concerns about the housing crisis in Skagit County. Issues raised included homelessness, the high cost of housing, and the impact of inflation on housing affordability. Chuck Messinger, Coordinated Entry System Manager with Volunteers of America. Provided numbers of households in Skagit County that are currently unhoused and seeking assistance, sharing those are the numbers of individuals in the program and not a full reflection of the County experiencing homelessness. Permanent supportive housing should be focused in urban areas near services. However temporary solutions providing safety and security are needed as rising costs and inflation are pushing many families and individuals into first time homelessness situations.

Shannon Bowman-Sarkisian, Public Services Librarian at Mount Vernon City Library, shared that when people are in housing crisis they often come to the library. This includes a wide range of people from youths, families, and seniors. Bowman-Sarkisian shared that staff housing is needed; people are unable to live where they work as she is unable to find affordable housing in Skagit and commutes from Bellingham.

Jessica Nyguen, senior mortgage lender serving Skagit County, shared information about current housing conditions in Skagit County. Median income does not allow for median sales price in the County. The City of Arlington is rapidly growing and will put a significant demand on Skagit County as the City's proposed housing units will not meet the demand of estimated employment.

Emily Mason shared her experience of losing stable housing in July due to passing of property owner whom she rented from for eight years and house was sold by conservator. Mason shared her and her family experiencing homelessness despite having a fulltime job as a housing and employment manager helping homeless with homes and jobs. Working full time and unable to make rent for a 2-bedroom apartment. Lack of affordable housing has pushed full time working families out of housing.

Steven Simmons, Social Worker with Community Action, shared his concerns about potential overlooking of housing for those earning 0-50% AMI, which seems to be left to cities to address. Suggestion was to create matching funds to help cities provide housing for this income group, emphasizing that the housing crisis affects all income levels.

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update – Preliminary Draft Policy Amendments for the Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development Elements

Clay White, project lead consultant, presented a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan Update Overview. Draft elements and policy revisions for this meeting are housing, land use, and economic development. White provided an overview of the project timeline, the importance of community input, and the process for updating the Comprehensive Plan. This is a two-piece process, early community engagement was done during the spring- summer and the draft elements will be released for review for public input. The deadline for completion is June 2025.

Housing and Land Use Element discussion focused on the need for policies to address housing for all income levels, growth, and coordination with cities since state law requires urban development in cities and Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), making it challenging for the County to balance affordable housing while keeping rural areas rural.

Concerns were raised about the timing and process of annexation for Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and the need for pre-planning infrastructure to support future growth. The conversation also touched on the challenges of zoning and development regulations that limit urban density in UGAs before annexation.

Economic Development policies have generally been updated to align with the Skagit Council of Governments' (SCOG) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy so there's consistency between the two. Draft policies will include coordination with the cities to facilitate job growth and the housing needs that are associated with it. The commission discussed aligning economic development policies with regional strategies, focusing on key industries, and supporting businesses while ensuring quality of life. There was shared interest in coordinating with cities with SCOG to facilitate job growth and ensuring that housing developments are well integrated with job opportunities and infrastructure.

Planning Commission Comments/Announcements

Commissioner Martha Rose mentioned that this was her last meeting and expressed her appreciation for her time with the Commission. The other commissioners also shared their gratitude for Commissioner Rose's contributions. Chair Raschko extended his appreciation for the public's input.

Adjourned at 7:08 PM

[A full transcript of the discussion is available on our website:
https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningCommission/PCminutes.htm](https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningCommission/PCminutes.htm)

Tim Raschko, Planning Commission Chair

Date

Jack Moore, Secretary

Date