

SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Planning Commission Regular Meeting

October 22, 2024

6:00 PM – 7:45 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

Present: Tim Raschko, (Chair), Tammy Candler, (Vice Chair), Amy Hughes, Vincent Henley, Jen Hutchison, Joe Woodmansee, Angela Day, Kiera Wright

Absent: Kathy Mitchell

Staff: Robby Eckroth, Tara Satushek

Consultants: Erin O’Kelley (Kimley-Horn), Andrea Martin, virtual (Cascadia), and Dan Nickel, virtual (Facet)

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

Approval of Minutes

Chair Raschko asked if there was approval for the October 8, 2024, minutes.

Commissioner Vincent Henley moved to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Angela Day seconded.

Vote: Support- 8, Oppose- 0, Abstain- 0. The motion carried.

Public Remarks

Chair Tim 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. There were no members of the public who wished to provide public comments.

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update- Environment and Climate Change, Resiliency and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

Chair Raschko called on staff for presentation, Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner, introduced Erin O’Kelley, project consultant with Kimley- Horn, who provided a brief overview of the items that will be presented. O’Kelley explained the project approach of releasing draft elements in phases and after this evening’s work session, all the policies will have been presented. O’Kelley

explained that there is a public comment for these draft elements and information about providing comment is available on the [project webpage](#). O'Kelley introduced Andrea Martin, sub-consultant with Cascadia Consulting, to present the public input received so far for the Climate Element. Martin then provided a summary of the community engagement focused on climate issues. The Climate Element will include goal and policy changes that reflect the community's voice, ensure consistency with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and recent state law changes, align with the Regional Transportation Plan by the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) and Countywide Planning Policies, streamline policy language, use active verbs for readability and engagement, and emphasize "action" policies to guide future direction and implementation.

The draft climate policies focuses on three main areas: climate resiliency, which aims to address natural hazards such as flooding, extreme heat, and sea-level rise while strengthening community partnerships and natural resource management; greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction, aligning with Washington State's goal of net zero emissions by 2050 by reducing per-person driving miles and supporting renewable energy; and environmental justice, prioritizing benefits for overburdened communities and promoting equitable access to green jobs and resilience hubs.

Martin provided a summary of key recommendations that the County has policy levers. Commissioners asked if the emissions inventory was used to develop policy recommendations and raised concerns about data accuracy in the GHG inventory and questioned the treatment of forest sequestration in land use policies. Martin explained that the emissions inventory was information that was used to inform policy in addition to other sources. O'Kelley asked the Planning Commission (PC) to share any concerns and consider how these might be integrated into other elements of the comprehensive plan. Key concerns included potential policies that could increase housing costs amidst an existing housing crisis, as well as the feasibility and cost of policy implementation. Eckroth requested that commissioners submit any additional concerns to staff.

The initial draft includes policies aimed at promoting partnerships and collaboration with other agencies and non-profits, optimizing existing plans, and leveraging federal, state, and private funding sources. Commissioners noted that the preliminary draft lacks specific details on some policies, such as those regarding sea level rise, which will require mapping efforts. There were also questions regarding the GHG Emissions report, specifically around understanding the current gap in emissions and the goals necessary to achieve reductions. Concerns were raised over limitations in energy sources proposed in the draft, particularly the need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels to meet climate goals, with an emphasis on prioritizing larger natural gas applications, such as HVAC systems and water heaters, in homes. Commissioners expressed a

desire for more information on these policies, their potential impacts, and the specifics of enforcement.

Additionally, commissioners discussed their concern over "ghost policies"—policies that lack clarity in intent or enforcement. O’Kelley explained that the draft currently does not contain prescriptive measures, rather opting instead for supportive language that encourages alternative transportation modes and options, rather than imposing restrictions on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Commissioners also voiced concerns about the financial and logistical impact of implementing climate policies, as well as what actions the County can realistically take to meet state mandates for GHG reduction. O’Kelley emphasized that much of this work will necessitate advocacy and partnerships with industry and utility companies, with an intention to draft policies that remain adaptable to technological advancements and emerging information. Concerns were also raised about the potential impact on fossil fuel industries and the implications of transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Martin handed the presentation over to Dan Nickel, sub-consultant with FACET to discuss preliminary draft revisions to the Environment Element. Nickel explained that one of the key areas for the environment policies was to identify the existing policies that can be enhanced to provide more support for implementation purposes. They are working to streamline the Comprehensive Plan by removing redundancies and eliminating references that overlap with the Critical Areas Ordinance. This includes cutting out extraneous sources and clarifying policy language, particularly to ensure alignment with new climate policies and improve overall clarity.

Planning Commission Comments/Announcements

Commissioners thanked everyone who worked on the project, gave the presentation, and answered questions.

Adjourned at 7:45 PM

[A full transcript of the discussion is available on our website:](#)

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

Tim Raschko, Planning Commission Chair

Date

Jack Moore, Secretary

Date