

SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

Planning Commission 2023 Regular Meeting December 12, 2023

Please refer to transcript and video recording of 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>

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Summary of Meeting

Roll Call

Tim Raschko: present

Tammy Candler: present

Amy Hughes: present

Vincent Henley: present

Kathy Mitchell: present

Martha Rose: absent

Jen Hutchison: present

Joe Woodmansee: present

Approval of Minutes

Chair Tim Raschko asked for approval of the minutes. Commissioner Woodmansee motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Henley seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

Public Remarks

There were no public remarks.

Deliberations on Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

Senior Planner Robby Eckroth provided an update on the process regarding the proposed Agritourism Code Changes. There have been many meetings regarding the proposed code changes and a decision will be made by the Board of County Commissioners regarding the potential adoption of the code changes.

Commissioner Mitchell moved to accept the proposed amendments as written. Commissioner Henley seconded the motion.

Commissioner Mitchell explained that the Agricultural Advisory Board was established with the purpose of advising on agricultural issues in Skagit County.

Commissioner Hutchison explained that she disagrees with the proposed code changes due to the community response.

Commissioner Woodmansee did not want to make any code changes because there are many businesses that exist and is concerned with the idea of shutting down the many existing businesses.

Commissioner Henley expressed his concerns with the enforcement of the current codes and the need for a pathway to compliance for current business.

Commissioner Hughes expressed her support for the proposed code changes and provided recommendations to improve the proposed codes.

Commissioner Candler expressed her support for preserving farmland and her support for the proposed code changes because it is supporting the codes that are already on the books.

Chair Tim Raschko expressed his frustration with the lack of enforcement and his support of the proposed code changes.

Chair Tim Raschko moved for a vote to approve the proposed code changes. Commissioner Hutchison and Commissioner Woodmansee were opposed while the remaining were in favor.

Recommendations, Findings of Fact and Reason for Action

- a. Skagitonians have supported farmland preservation and agriculture for many years. Preserving the agricultural land base and protecting farmers is of community interest.
- b. Unregulated addition of non-farm venues can result in interference with farms and farm activity
- c. Non-farm accessory uses threaten farming and farmland in Skagit County.
- d. Agritourism by definition has to start with agriculture.
- e. The proposed clarifications and changes are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and County Planning Policies.
- f. Food production is of critical life sustaining importance. Skagit County is considered to have prime agricultural soil which has been set aside and protected as Agricultural-NRL zoning.
- g. Lack of enforcement of the current and proposed changed code have the potential to create confusion. We further recommend that the Board of County Commissioners

consider options of enforcement and pathways to compliance for those businesses that are presently operating.

- h. The County adopted Ordinance #12815, the Right-to-Farm ordinance, to support soils-based farming January 1991.
- i. The Agricultural Advisory Committee was formed to advise the Board of County Commissioner on April 2002 (and later the Planning Commission) under Resolutions #R20020134. That coupled with Comprehensive Plan Policies *Required Disclosure of Right to Manage Natural Resources Land* supports the right-to-farm as a strong policy for the County.
- j. RCW 36.70A.020(8), RCW 36.70A.060(1), and RCW 36.70.A070 are evidence of legislative mandates for preservation of agricultural land.
- k. Skagit County's efforts to protect and preserve farmland traces back to the 1960s when land use plans, policies, regulations, and programs were first adopted and implemented by the Board of County Commissioners. Today Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan protects and conserves agriculture land of long-term significance and seeks to continue their viability, now and into the future.
- l. Skagit County must continue to meet the challenges of maintaining and further enhancing commercial agriculture, including steps to limit land uses which adversely effects commercial agriculture; prevent and minimize land use conflicts between agriculture and adjacent land uses.

Chair Tim Raschko called for a vote to approve the findings of fact and reason for action. Commissioners Hutchison and Woodmansee abstained while the others approved.

Director's Update

Director Jack Moore provided an update on the recent flood activity. There are new state requirements for tsunami designs. Guemes Island is in a tsunami risk area. There has been a large reduction in the backlogs of building permits by about 2 months. Staff members met with representatives on Skagit Speedway to assist with compliance concerns. There has been work with the Port of Skagit regarding development occurring in the area. The Planning and Development Services Department has reduced the number of code compliance issues by a large amount.

Planning Commission Comments/Announcements

Commissioner Hughes and Mitchell complimented staff for their work throughout the year. Commissioner Henely wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Commissioner Woodmansee and Hutchison expressed their gratitude for the Planning Commission and the Planning Department. Chair Tim Raschko acknowledged that the

agritourism issue was the most difficult thing they have addressed and expressed gratitude for the respect everyone had for each other.

[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)

Adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Tim Raschko, Planning Commission Chair

Date

Jack Moore, Secretary

Date