



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RON WESEN, First District
KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Second District
SHARON D. DILLON, Third District

January 31, 2012

Skagit County Planning Commission
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon WA 98273
via email


Dear Planning Commissioners:

As we begin 2012 with additional staff reductions in the Planning Department and the prospect of a new Planning Director, we believe now is an appropriate time to review the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Planning Commission and its interaction with the Board and the Planning Department. As you might expect, we have just as many mandatory projects to process this year, and we will need both the Planning Commission and the Planning Department operating at their best.

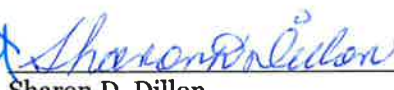
We are sincerely interested in your ideas for how we can make the Planning Commission and the public process of adopting plans and development regulations work better. We have enclosed a list of questions that we intend to stimulate discussion; you need not answer all of these questions, nor should you feel constrained to providing feedback in response to only these questions.

You should feel free to take time at your next meeting to discuss these issues. Following that meeting, we hope you will individually take some time to send us your substantive feedback and ideas. Please e-mail us at commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us or call Chairman Dahlstedt at 336-9300. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your service to Skagit County.

Sincerely,


Kenneth A. Dahlstedt

Chairman


Sharon D. Dillon

Commissioner


Ron Wesen

Commissioner

SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

1800 CONTINENTAL PLACE, SUITE 100, MOUNT VERNON, WA 98273 PHONE (360) 336-9300 FAX (360) 336-9307

Questions to Stimulate Discussion

1. State law (RCW 36.70.040) creates the Planning Commission to “assist the planning department in carrying out its duties, including assistance in the preparation and execution of the comprehensive plan and recommendations to the department for the adoption of official controls and/or amendments thereto.” How can the Planning Commission best perform that function?
2. How can we improve relations between Planning Commissioners and Planning Department staff?
3. Do you feel that the bylaws and county code have adequately guided your process of reviewing plans and proposals? Are there any aspects of the bylaws that need clarification or revision?
4. The Board of County Commissioners is considering adopting a countywide policy on ethics and on rules of conduct for its boards, committees, and commissions. Based on your experience on the Planning Commission, what rules should be included in such a policy?
5. How can Planning Commission meetings and processes be structured to maximize participation from planning commissioners and the public?
6. How can staff presentations to the Planning Commission be structured to ensure the effective use of your time, and your understanding of the material?
7. Do you find value in editing code proposals line-by-line, or would you prefer to focus on the broader aspects of proposals?
8. If you attended the Short Course on Local Planning last year, did you find it worthwhile? Would you like to, and would you be able to, attend other similar trainings? How frequently?
9. Should there be limits on the number of terms Planning Commissioners can serve? If so, what should the limit be?
10. Should there be limits on the number of years a Planning Commissioner can serve as chair or vice chair? If so, what should the limit be?
11. Are you interested in being able to provide input into the Planning Department’s annual work program? How should that input be channeled?
12. Would you enjoy an informal evening gathering at the start of each year with the Board of County Commissioners, staff, and the public?
13. Are there aspects of the current meeting scheduling process that you find troublesome, or especially helpful?
14. Some jurisdictions compensate their Planning Commissioners with a small stipend of \$50 per meeting. Would you be interested in receiving such a stipend? What if it replaced the mileage reimbursement and associated paperwork?
15. State law allows Planning Commissions to have five, seven, or nine members. Should we make any change in the number of members of our Planning Commission?
16. Can you describe an experience during your tenure as planning commissioner that you found especially positive? Especially negative? What led to those experiences?
17. Do you have ideas for ways the County’s Agricultural Advisory Board and Forestry Advisory Board can best plug into the process?