

**Skagit County Planning Commission
Work Session: SMP Update
August 10, 2021**

Planning

Commissioners: Kathy Mitchell (absent)
Mark Knutzen
Vince Henley
Amy Hughes
Tim Raschko, Chair (absent)
Joe Woodmansee (absent)
Tammy Candler, Vice Chair/Acting Chair
Martha Rose
Joseph Shea

Staff: Hal Hart, Planning Director
Betsy Stevenson, Senior Planner
Peter Gill, Long Range Planning Manager
Daniel Hasenoehrl, Planning Intern

Others: Dan Nickel, Consultant (The Watershed Company)

Acting Chair Tammy Candler: (gavel) I'm going to call to meeting the August 10th, 2021, Skagit County Planning Commission meeting, and I think we should start with the roll call. I will say our leader Tim Raschko cannot be here tonight, so at your service Vice Chair Tammy Candler. We start at the end, and tell me if you're here.

Commissioner Joseph Shea: Joseph Shea, present.

Commissioner Vince Henley: Vince Henley, present.

Commissioner Mark Knutzen: Mark Knutzen, present.

Commissioner Martha Rose: Martha Rose, present.

Commissioner Amy Hughes: Amy Hughes, present.

Chair Candler: And, Peter Gill, do we have any Commissioners present via Zoom?

Peter Gill: No, we do not.

Chair Candler: Thank you. So the next item on the agenda is going to be the Approval of Minutes. Do we have a motion?

Commissioner Rose: So moved.

Commissioner Henley: Second.

Chair Candler: It's been moved and seconded to approve our minutes. Please vote by an aye or nay. All in favor?

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Candler: Any opposed, say nay.

(silence)

Chair Candler: None opposed. It would pass. Okay. And now we will move to the agenda item Public Remarks. It looks like we have someone signing in but I don't know – ma'am, are you here to make any public remarks tonight? Okay.

Unidentified female voice: (inaudible)

Chair Candler: Thank you. Mr. Gill, it doesn't look like we have anybody present to make any public remarks. Do we have anybody on Zoom at this time?

Mr. Gill: If you're on Zoom and you would like to have three minutes' worth of public remarks, you will have to unmute yourself.

(silence)

Chair Candler: Hearing no immediate response, I will move on to the Shoreline Master Program Update Work Session and turn it over to the Department.

Mr. Gill: Thank you. Tonight we have Dan Nickel from The Watershed Company, as well as Betsy from the Department to discuss the Shoreline Master Program. We did distribute, albeit late, a set of comments from the public from the public during the open comment period, with a few recommended changes that the Department would like to discuss tonight. After that, we would like to open it up to discuss other public comments that you all have – would like to discuss as well. So with that, I'll turn it over to Dan and Betsy and you can take it away from there.

Chair Candler: So we're not able to hear you.

Commissioner Knutzen: I'm not hearing them at all!

Mr. Gill: No?

Chair Candler: Have a little bit of a sound issue.

Commissioner Henley: Sound is still not ____.

Mr. Gill: Let me see here. Dan is unmuted. Bear with us here. This is a work in progress!

Chair Candler: Okay.

Mr. Gill: Dan, can you share your screen?

(silence)

Chair Candler: The Department can input if they want to, but it might be a good idea to take a five-minute recess or so to try to work on our technical issues. Does that sound like a good idea, fellow Commissioners?

Commissioner Henley: Sounds like a good idea.

Several Commissioners: (sounds of agreement)

Chair Candler: Okay. We'll be in recess for five (gavel).

(recess)

Commissioner Henley: I can hear you partially.

Betsy Stevenson: It looks like the hearing room podium computer is on mute. I don't know that that matters. Maybe I can still speak from up here. Oh, I got a thumbs up. He can hear me so we're good.

Chair Candler: Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: So anyway I'll go back to where I started a minute ago. Just wanted to give you some idea of this layout. We just took what they submitted to us. So this is their submittal to us and the only thing that we put any – is the shaded column, just in case you were wondering. None of the other – like the – they took what our language is in the first column. The second column is their proposed language, and then they put some rationale in there for why they proposed the changes in the next column, and then the last gray, shaded area is where we put our comments. Okay, just making sure.

So if you scroll through – and I'll try not to rattle the pages too close to the microphone – first – and right now we are just going with the ones that we did accept at this point. We are still working on some of them, and some of them we probably won't recommend for change but for now these are the ones that we were able to come up with a recommended change for you guys to look at and consider as well. So it looks like it's on page 11, and you're probably already there. So basically this is the discussion about developed area or hard surfaces. The requirement from the WAC indicates that new development should only be at a 10% coverage, and we talked a little bit about this at our last meeting. I think we were kind of trying to see how that was going to work. So what maybe wasn't clear is that any existing development, if it was more than that, that would be okay, but any new lots that were created – that would be created after the Shoreline Program goes into effect, they would have to fall under that 10% lot coverage for any lots within shoreline jurisdiction. Does that make sense? Okay. So that's what we intend to do with this, is to make it a little bit clearer and to go ahead and add in the 10% for any new lots created after the Master Program goes into play.

I'm sorry I'm struggling a little bit. I'm not feeling really great so I'm short-breathed. So I'm going to be taking some breaths and taking a minute so I apologize for that, and if I pass out just go on and pull somebody else up and we'll just go from there! But hopefully I won't! So basically we were going to add a footnote to this table – is kind of where we identified it – if you guys are okay with that.

I'll move to the next one, which is on the next page, talking about lighting. They asked for us to include downward lighting there, was their change on item number 8. Sometimes downward

lighting isn't the best for the critical area or whatever it is that you're trying to avoid, so we put in there "directional sign lighting must be directed away from critical areas unless necessary for public health and safety." Sometimes downward isn't really what you want. And it's a little bit more specific, so this way we can do it on a case-by-case basis and decide what's best, if that makes sense. Figure out what it is we're trying to light and why and use the best way to do that. So that was our proposed change there. And please stop me as we're going through – I'm okay with you doing that – and we can talk about it. That's probably easier than me shuffling back through the pages when we get all done. I know last time we kind of wanted to get through everything, but even with all the challenges tonight we will still get through them all. There's only a few of them.

Okay, next one (discussion about page numbering) Okay, so this is where we were talking about shoreline stabilization and they were concerned about using boulders as soft shoreline stabilization, which is – it's a valid concern. So basically we offered something different, where we just indicate in there – let's see, we left in the rest of the language to include – we added what's underlined – sorry – in terms of describing what soft shoreline stabilization is because we didn't define it in our version in this portion. We leave that to the Definitions section. So we went ahead and added a longer description to match what they did, but we did go ahead and leave boulders, logs as well as vegetation. Boulders *are* a part of that and they can be used in soft shoreline work, so we didn't want to exclude that. We realized that if you put a lot of boulders together in a line it becomes riprap, but we wanted to leave it in there so that we can still use it because it is something that is used pretty regularly, even with a soft shoreline stabilization project. So it's just interspersed a little more, if that make sense. Amy?

Commissioner Hughes: So does that mean it's a personal decision or it'd have to be approved by staff?

Ms. Stevenson: It would be a staff, yeah. But they wanted us to keep it out altogether because they don't believe that it really qualifies as soft shoreline stabilization. But in the bigger scheme of the design, it certainly can.

Chair Candler: I have a question. Do you know specifically why they want the "as well as" taken out?

Commissioner Henley: The language seems a little convoluted there.

Ms. Stevenson: I think it just – the "as well as" sounds kind of funny, if that makes sense. It just reads better to say "and."

Commissioner Henley: I think if you just said "comma, logs as well" and forget the "and" and just say "as well as vegetation."

Ms. Stevenson: Or maybe "logs and" and take out the "as well." "Logs and vegetation" is a lot cleaner – if you guys are okay with that.

Commissioner Henley: Just make it good English and it'll probably work well.

Ms. Stevenson: Yep, yep. I think we may have just missed that – taking that out. I'm going to say that for now. Because it does sound funny the way it is in here too. Okay, does that make sense now? Okay, great. Thank you.

Okay, what's the next one, Peter, and then I can dig through the pages.

Several voices: 32.

Ms. Stevenson: 32? Okay, good. I'll go back to the other pages if I need to. Okay. Okay, Dan and I had a long discussion about this one because I was having trouble wrapping my head around it, but I'm good with it now. Basically our critical areas ordinance does make a differentiation between what we're looking for when we go out on a site for indicators and we look within about 200 feet of where the proposed development is for any critical areas indicators and then determine whether they need to do a site assessment or whether there aren't any critical areas within 200 feet and they're done and ready to go. But in this scenario, it does make sense because we have actual wetland buffers with high density development in a Category 1 wetland – which I hope we will never have those but we could – that has a 300-foot buffer. So if we're only looking 200 feet, we might miss a Category 1 wetland that would need a 300-foot buffer. So I understand the logic to it. It means that this is something that we should note and probably change in the critical areas ordinance too. So I don't know if that makes sense to you or not. The buffer distance that you would have to stay away from the edge of the wetland would be 300 feet, but if we're going out there to do our site visit looking for indicators and only go 200 feet we might miss some of the distance that would overlap in a Category 1 wetland with a high density development. So it makes good sense to change it here now and then to go ahead and look at it again when we update our critical areas ordinance.

Next page, Peter, please. I'm sorry.

Mr. Gill: Page 47.

Ms. Stevenson: Thank you – just so I'm going in the right direction now still. The numbers seem to be in order now. It's really helpful. Thanks.

Okay, so this is one that was under the Part 5, which is our critical areas ordinance, the portions that we brought over. And they specifically called it out under the geologically hazardous area mitigation standards to add Best Available Science and Best Management Practices. That's kind of true for all of our critical areas, so we went ahead and decided to put it into a different section which actually talks about what's required for a site assessment and the procedures and what you're reviewing. So it's before each of the separate critical areas sections so it applies to all critical areas that we'd be using Best Available Science and Best Management Practices rather than just the geologically hazardous areas. Okay.

It looks like the next one is on page 52, I think. Okay, okay. So in this section under the Riparian Buffers, they asked us to add vi. and vii. at the end of (1)(a) there. So it's actually our recommended changes here, but what they're asking to be added is on page 53. And basically we agreed. That sounds like a good addition here so we went ahead and just added those just the way that they suggested we do it.

So some of these we're still working on as a staff. Some of them are kind of overlapping with some of the other comments that we received generally and so we want to make sure that we're being consistent and we get it right. So we're still working on some of these, but we wanted to get it to you so that you would have the whole thing, and then at least identify the ones that at this point in time we are recommending changes to. So it's still a work in progress. There's still a lot of material to be going through and I'm not quite there yet. So still working on it. We're getting much closer so hopefully no meeting – at least for us – later this month will give me time to kind of get caught up and be able to do that. So that's what we have for you in the way of a presentation tonight. We're happy to try to answer any questions that as you've been looking through this that

you've jotted down. I know some of you have sent emails and we still have those. We intend to address those and go through them. But if there's anything else that you need that we can supply to you to make it easier.... You are going to be getting another big chunk of material. There was a lot of supporting documents that were submitted hard copy – because they were too large to go through the open house portal when people were submitting comments – from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. So you will be getting probably large emails, I'm guessing because it's about a thousand pages. But I know you guys need to have it. It's part of the record. So you should be seeing it and looking at it and reviewing as much as you can, but we're still reviewing all of it as well.

Chair Candler: What I'd like to do, if that's – this is the right time – is ask if any of the Planning Commission has comments as to those items you just addressed. And we could take them one at a time or if anybody has – I can go through and call them out one at a time or if anybody wants to just jump in.

Commissioner Shea: I just have one comment.

Chair Candler: Okay, go ahead.

Commissioner Shea: Maybe it's not a super smart comment, I guess, but on 14.26.562, the Geological Hazardous Areas –

Chair Candler: Commissioner Shea, can you give us a page number?

Commissioner Shea: Oh sorry – 47.

Chair Candler: Thank you.

Commissioner Shea: When you're talking about Best Available Science and Best Management Practice: So BMPs, I think those are fairly well defined in certain fields of work, I guess, but for this as it reads I'm just wondering what is our interpretation of Best Available Science, especially since the first part – you know, "The site assessment shall use scientifically valid methods and studies...", which I think is in that sense using Best Available Science. And then Best Available Practices and the actual management practices. I guess – you know, using Best Available Science as in – as opposed to *not* the Best Available Science? It just seems kind of wordy and, you know, we already talk about scientifically valid methods and studies. So that's just my thought reading it.

Commissioner Rose: I'd like to comment about that. Science changes over time and so I think it's valid to keep that wording in there like that, because what is today's best methods we might learn more about them and next year or five years from now it might be different. And so to me this wording allows for those types of changes to occur without pinning them down and defining what are, because we don't *know* what they are. And I think of that one example, that little video clip that I shared with the other Planning Commissioners. The work that is being done all over the world actually where they're taking manmade boulders and creating shoreline ecosystems with them by creating hollow spots in them for different sea life to nestle in. And that's one example that comes readily to mind. And I don't know when that was worked out, but that's relatively new science. And I know there's other examples but, any rate, that's what I think about with this.

Commissioner Shea: Yeah, that makes sense to me. I just – in my brain, the scientific, valid methods and studies – the scientifically valid studies would include all new studies coming up.

But I do understand the point of putting in some sort of Best Available Science to make sure we're not staying with, like, an old, outdated study. I understand that. But, yeah.

Chair Candler: Anyone else on that topic?

Commissioner Henley: I think if there's a Definitions section in the SMP you should put it in the Definitions section. If you're going to have an argument about what a term means, then it seems reasonable to me that it should be defined somewhere where it can be used over and over again as a reference.

Chair Candler: That's a good question. Do you think these terms right here *are* defined somewhere – even in the code somewhere?

Ms. Stevenson: They are defined in the code.

Chair Candler: They're defined in the code. Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: It comes from the critical areas ordinance. I can't tell you for sure because I don't have it in front of me if we've actually carried that over into the Shoreline Program, but it does come from the critical areas ordinance which comes from the State requirements for our critical areas ordinance development. So it is defined.

Chair Candler: Makes sense. Thank you. Other thoughts on this topic?

(silence)

Chair Candler: Any other of the topics that were brought up by the presentation? Commissioner Hughes.

Commissioner Hughes: I'd like to go back to last meeting's conversation on the 10%. It would be page 11, so it'd be the first one. And we were kind of talking about this last time and, Martha, I'll look at you. Is 10% large enough for a small lot? And I realize this is new, so for new lot sizes. But how does it apply?

Commissioner Rose: I think that – if I recall the conversation – it only applies to the portion of the lot that falls within the shoreline. And a lot of these lots would have a segment that falls within the shoreline, official shoreline, area. And you might have a long, skinny lot, for example, and maybe you want to build your house right down on the shoreline, but now you have a bigger setback. And so I think the point was that – there were two things. One was these lots are pretty big – an acre, I think, was the size.

Commissioner Hughes: Okay.

Commissioner Rose: And 10% of an acre is 4,000 square feet. But also there was – that was one piece of the conversation and the other piece had to do with the fact that there was a likelihood that part of the lot would not even be in the area governed by this 10%. So I came away from that discussion feeling okay about it. And I remember Joe was particularly more concerned about it than I was but I got the feeling that he too came away satisfied that it would be okay based on the typical lot size and that much of it is not in that shoreline area, and when it's *not* that percentage goes up significantly. So you might have a driveway approach, for example, that's not in the

shoreline area, and that's a bunch of your impervious surface. And then your house, right? Am I getting it right, Betsy?

Ms. Stevenson: Every example is going to be slightly different, but what you're describing will work and how you're saying that. But, like I said, each lot's going to be slightly different as far as how that works.

Commissioner Rose: Right.

Ms. Stevenson: And the lot sizes could be different in a CaRD and smaller, but that's part of why you do a CaRD, is to protect the sensitive areas. At least if I were reviewing it and we had a CaRD with some shoreline area, that would be the area that was left in the open space lot, and the development would actually occur outside of that, if you could. That would be why you would do a CaRD, because it gives you the flexibility to put the lots, you know, up by the road and protect whatever it is you're trying to protect, with all kinds of different types of classifications on the CaRDs.

Commissioner Henley: But one of the problems in my mind seems to be not just the size of the lot where you're going to extract the 10% but also the shape of the lot. For example, if I have a completely different configuration – if you had, say, a roughly square lot versus a long, thin one. And I think around shorelines we're likely to get a fair share of long, thin lots – are we not? And so there, I think the 10% might be a little strange.

Commissioner Rose: But the 10% only applies to the area within the shoreline.

Commissioner Henley: Yeah, but that's creeping up. I mean, the area – the way the shoreline is working now, okay, that's getting to be more and more inland than it used to be with this plan.

Commissioner Rose: Correct.

Commissioner Henley: All right, so –

Commissioner Knutzen: We're talking 300 feet inland, I think. Is that what the new proposal is? 300 feet? 200 to just 300 instead?

Commissioner Shea: 300 would be for high impact – or high development or high density?

Commissioner Knutzen: From the shoreline.

Commissioner Henley: Yeah. I think we've got creeping **excellence** going on here.

Commissioner Knutzen: And so it's 43,560 divided by 300 is only 140 feet – 150 feet wide.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay, so the shoreline – the shoreline –

Commissioner Knutzen: That's 300 feet deep and that's 100% of it's in the area. So then you're limited to 4300 square feet impervious surface? So that includes the driveway even, not just a building, not just a footprint for a building. That's the driveway and parking and everything.

Commissioner Henley: Yep.

Commissioner Knutzen: It isn't very much.

Mr. Gill: Can I suggest that we bring an example to the next meeting to kind of lay out what this might look like on the landscape and whether there are any lots within the Rural Conservancy that actually could still –

Commissioner Knutzen: One acre is not the minimum size either. Is it?

Mr. Gill: It is for a cluster,

Commissioner Knutzen: It is?

Ms. Stevenson: No, it's not. A minimum is 5,000 square feet. An acre is the largest you can get, is the maximum. So if you look at the CaRD.

Commissioner Knutzen: Yeah, I looked at Samish Island. There is not a lot out there on the beach – down on North Beach it's one acre.

Ms. Stevenson: No, those lots were developed a long time ago. I do want to say something about one of the questions that you asked, though. We are not changing the shoreline jurisdictional boundaries from 200 feet to 300 feet. The definition of what is a shoreline is remaining the same. And the automatic that people think of is "200 feet from the ordinary high water mark." There's obviously other things that play into that. If you have floodway, and if you've got associated wetlands, and all of that. The 300 feet that we're talking about where we change 200 to 300 was the critical areas review area that we're going to be looking at to look for indicators when we go out to the site. We're going to go 300 feet from where the proposed development is to look to see if there's any indicators for any type of critical areas, so it's a little bit different. That doesn't necessarily mean that would – the whole thing would be within shoreline jurisdiction – if that makes sense. This is trying to make it easier, and it's going to be really hard this first time around bringing the critical areas ordinance information into the Shoreline Program. Once we do it, I think it's going to be better for everybody. But I appreciate all of your thoughts and questions to make sure that we're getting it right and everybody's understanding it. So this is really helpful to me.

Commissioner Rose: A couple examples would be awesome.

Ms. Stevenson: Yeah, okay. We can certainly get some things put together. That shouldn't be too hard at all. That's a great idea.

Chair Candler: Anything else on that topic?

(silence)

Chair Candler: Does anybody have anything else on the topics in the presentation?

Commissioner Shea: Just a clarification, but you already did a little bit. So when you're talking about the critical areas of the high densities – so when you go out and see if there's a critical area – the 200 to 300, like you said, is just because the 300-foot distance, if it's – sorry, was it a Level 3 or Level –

Ms. Stevenson: Category 1.

Commissioner Shea: Category 1 –

Ms. Stevenson: Which is the highest category for a wetland.

Commissioner Shea: Gotcha. So the most beneficial wetland, we want it at least any high impact 300 feet. That's just being consistent. But then that's not related to the shoreline environment designation when you're talking about 200 feet for high intensity on rivers and streams and then 140 feet for – I think that's where the confusion came in.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay. Yes. No, we split it out based on shoreline designation for other types of buffers on the rivers and streams.

Commissioner Shea: So just to tag on to that, so let's say you have a high intensity building that is 200 feet from a river and that's your buffer for upland uses – is 200 feet. So if you have a wetland 300 feet away but you're only required to do 200-foot of buffer to that wetland – or to that river or stream. Does that make sense at all?

Ms. Stevenson: It does. What I'm thinking – what's going through my head, since it sounds like it's a question, and we're being a little bit – I'm not waiting to be called on or anything – we're being a little bit more casual.

Commissioner Shea: _____, you walked out to a property and you say there's wetland over there, it's 300 feet away from our proposed building. But that's going to affect our potential uses or wherever you put the building, but we only have to plant in 200 feet or have a buffer for 200 feet. So you have 100-foot, so you look and see there's critical areas and then after that you would just need to do 200 feet and not keep that 300-foot buffer to that wetland.

Ms. Stevenson: Maybe. This is horrible, what was going through my head. It could be an associated wetland, which means that it *is* part of the shoreline jurisdiction. So you would have to go beyond that. If that wetland is associated with that stream or river, then it would become part of the shoreline area and you wouldn't be able to separate them as you're talking about. If it's an isolated wetland and they can show when we go out there to do the work that it isn't associated, that's a whole –

Commissioner Shea: (unintelligible)

Ms. Stevenson: Probably, but we don't know that for sure – then what you say is absolutely right. But if it is associated, it becomes part of the shoreline area.

Commissioner Shea: Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: Sometimes I think I'm making it more confusing because it's clear in my head but it just – it does depend a lot. There's a lot of things that you have to take into consideration, so stop me if you don't get it or if I'm not explaining it well.

Commissioner Shea: Just as a consistency thing, if we're going 300 for, you know, seeing if there's critical areas near potential high density development, you know, why is it 200 for maintaining ___? And I understand what you're saying there, but just two different numbers for the same similar potential project.

Ms. Stevenson: Thank you.

Mr. Gill: Just to follow up on an earlier comment, if I could, Chair. There is a definition for “Best Available Science” and “Best Management Practices” in 14.04.

Chair Candler: Thank you for that. Okay, so we had a couple of other proposed changes that we haven’t touched on yet. Anybody have comments on those? Page 52 is one of them, with some additions, at –

Commissioner Rose: Well, there was the one about the boulders.

Chair Candler: Yeah.

Commissioner Rose: I actually agree with keeping the boulder in there – you know, the soft boulder approach – because I understand that what we don’t want is a sea wall made out of rockery anymore. That was a very popular method. That’s an example of Best Available Science changing. We now know that those are very destructive. So at any rate, I’m in favor of keeping the boulder as long as it’s, you know, here and there.

Chair Candler: And that’s page 27, I think. Any other thoughts on that particular issue?

(silence)

Chair Candler: Okay. Any other thoughts on any of this from the presentation tonight?

(silence)

Chair Candler: So now we have to decide, you know, where do we go tonight from here. Does anyone want to open this up to talk about some other categories that haven’t been part of the – does anybody have any burning desire to discuss things that were not part of the presentation tonight or do you want to wait for the Department’s response? What are your thoughts?

Commissioner Henley: I’d like to see the response.

Commissioner Rose: I agree with that. I think it’s a lot more productive to see what the Department is thinking and then add or subtract from that.

(sounds of consent from several Commissioners)

Chair Candler: Okay, it sounds like we have basically a consensus. Anybody opposed to that?

(silence)

Chair Candler: Okay. With that, Peter, do we have anything else on this agenda item tonight?

Mr. Gill: Other than to bring up that we did distribute the verbal comments that were at the hearing and we will incorporate our responses to those verbal comments in the overall comment matrix. And so that’ll be part of the next iteration of that comment matrix.

Chair Candler: Great.

Mr. Gill: And so the way this all fits together is that the packet of very specific – the table, I should say, of specific comments from Kyle Loring will be an attachment to that overall comment matrix. Right? So it's all packaged in one place for you in the future.

Chair Candler: Okay. Anything from your perspective?

Ms. Stevenson: No. Thank you guys very much again for all your time and dedication to this. I know a lot of you have been at it for a long time right along with me and I appreciate it very much. And for those of you who haven't, thank you so much for getting up to speed and being such a great part of the process. It's really important so thank you very much. And it's good to see you all! Thank you.

Chair Candler: So I guess we'll close out. Barring an objection, we'll close out that agenda item and move on to the Director's Update.

Hal Hart: Peter's going to try and pull that up. One thing I was just listening (to) and I want to comment on, Betsy. I think it'd be really important to show how we look at shoreline setbacks for a given home development, just as a – can you hear me?

Ms. Stevenson: (inaudible)

Mr. Hart: Yeah, sorry about that. One, I think it'd be really good to show the shoreline setbacks, how they work; to then tie in shoreline setback with a wetland, how that would be reviewed; and then an associated wetland with the shorelines would be the third category. Because each one of those brings a different analysis, and so that would be really helpful for everybody to see that. And I know you deal with that every day. Okay.

Mr. Hart: I just have a few quick comments. Peter, did you put your first page of comments in?

Mr. Gill: Yes.

Mr. Hart: I'll let you go.

Mr. Gill: Oh. Actually I'm at the end, so go ahead.

Mr. Hart: Okay, I'll make it very quick. So we are in the midst of our busy season right now. Typically we do somewhere around 200 homes a year in the rural areas or 300, just depending. We're somewhere in there. I think we would be looking at that again this year. August, right now I looked on the – what the plans examiners are reviewing – 19 different homes right now, and so we're short of plans examiner help but we brought some in to help us at this peak period. So a lot of people are saying, Hey, what are you doing and are we keeping up with demand, and I think it brings up a wider discussion of what's going on with Skagit County as well as surrounding counties, and especially I always go to the counties to the south. So just a quick update.

Right now building permits are steady and they remain ahead of last year. We are working on building what I call administrative redundancy. We have a person checking permits but when they get overwhelmed what happens – when we have so many in the line – what happens is we are lining up consultants to come in and assist the staff during the peak period. So that's what we're doing this year. We haven't always done that but we've been allowed to do that and it's something new. I just kind of wanted to bring you up ___ so that we'll have consultants that can assist us

getting those permits out the door in a more timely manner than what would otherwise be the case. So the Commissioners are very insistent that we work that way and I think it's a good thing.

The other thing we're working on is we are always in discussion with the City planners about what's going on in our housing market. And I would just say right now the concerning point is Mount Vernon. As we look at subdivisions in Mount Vernon there's six new homes going on one subdivision and the other subdivision is nearly built out with just three or four left. And what happens after that? So what's in the Mount Vernon chain for new housing has an impact on everything else too. And the houses that we see in Mount Vernon are in the 7 to 800,000 range – maybe low 6 in one subdivision, but 7 to 800,000. So that's not affordable to folks – most of the folks that are living in this area at the present time. There's a number of things going on.

And let's just go to the next slide – second slide, if you can do that. So what the economists are saying is our new housing supply is really constrained. Material costs, as everybody knows, are really high – right? – and labor supply remains constrained. And one of the things that's going on regional that's different this year than in previous years is the highest demand is in central to eastern King County, where there's a huge growth in software development and jobs – right? And that demand is headed south towards Pierce County and it hasn't done that before in the way that it's doing it this year. And so I thought that was really interesting. If you go north from King County to south Snohomish County – really high prices still. Houses going for a million, two million, that were going for 700,000 less than just a few years back. Two million bucks, three million bucks, just because it's all about proximity and how much those people can afford to pay, and their software industry is leading the – you know, among the leaders of the world right now. So it's distorting the market for everybody else is what I think is happening. And I was attending the housing conference, the Bellevue Association of Business Housing Conference, and they're kind of saying the same thing in a different way. So Snohomish County prices continue to increase, driving consumers south to Pierce County and that's different.

For south Snohomish County – and I'll do just quickly go around, and I'm on the third one now, Peter.

Mr. Gill: Okay.

Mr. Hart: South Snohomish County, the average is seven days on the market and, boom, it's gone. The median sales price down there is 692,000. It's up 20% over last year. 2021 real estate market continues to be really hot in south county.

And so we'll just go to the next slide. Outlook for north Snohomish County – so we're getting closer now. This is where I was saying last month that you can drive from Stanwood to Conway in eight minutes, eight-and-a-half minutes on the Memorial Highway. That's how close. And so there are new subdivisions going in Stanwood, like 88 to 100 units in Stanwood, and so that growth is that close to Skagit County if you think of Stanwood as the edge of that economic kind of growth coming north. Now that's just eight minutes away when I drove that the other day. So it's kind of interesting. There it's lower prices – median price is 525,000 so that's a lot less than south Snohomish County. But average stay in market's a little bit longer and they're getting more – so what's going on there, it says that June had the highest amount of listings year-to-date. So I think what's going on is there's a lot of housing coming on the market. More housing in that north part seems to be coming on the market and I drive it all the time, looking around.

So let's talk about some good news. Some good news, so let's go to _____. This is a good news story. It's affordable housing project that in June that you can see the Commissioners are there,

some City officials are there. And that's an example of aiming at the low market rent, so whatever the area median income is and then a few percentage points below that. So they are trying to create some workforce housing there. And so that's – I don't have the numbers. It's going to be a four-story, so it's multistory going up in Anacortes, so that's one good thing.

Let's go to the next page. This is another story. We met this developer last week, Peter and I. This is Dave Irwin. Dave Irwin is doing – I think this is 14 units. So it's not a huge project but, you know, you get your housing units however you can, and he's coming in 14 housing units. And he came to us saying, Hey, how can we get more housing going around the county? How do I do that? What can he do to do that? And so we really encourage the Cities first to look within the city and rezone that area within the city. That's the first goal. Second, we say, Okay, after you've done all those things then you then you look at a UGA. And right now the way we look at UGAs the minimum for a UGA is just four houses to an acre. And I think that's pretty low. Right? And that's a suburban standard that was set many, many years ago, and I think we need to look at that again at some point in the future and say, Well, do we just want to have four units to an acre at that edge or do you want something else in the future? That may be something to think about.

You can have some interesting – here's another picture. Same guy with housing there. And then finally – it's the same project. That's where the project actually is right now from last week. So he sent those pictures to me after we met with him.

So let's go to the next one. And then I'm not even sure what this one is. I caught this Friday afternoon. But this is another new housing effort going on in Anacortes. I'll get more information as time goes by. So Anacortes is doing some things right. They rezone, they've got some projects going, and they're getting housing however they can. The interesting thing about this one, you might know, is just down below there's – you know, there's single-family homes right next to it. So that's what a City has to battle. And that's a tough battle, too – right? – to have a five-story building going next to your single-family home. So I feel for that situation in that the Cities have to deal with that issue. Our issue is if they don't handle the housing, people will come to the county. And our goal is that 80% of all the housing go into the cities, right? That's a goal we're shooting for. But, Peter, what was the number we think we hit last year, I think it was? We were getting 27% – is that –

Mr. Gill: 27% of the growth is actually in the county.

Mr. Hart: So that's one of the differences. So we're not exactly where we want to be. We want to get more of that going into those empty lots, those underutilized lots in the cities any way we can. And that we do have a stake in that because we fund for low to moderate-income housing and some of that workforce housing is funded from various tools that the County's in control of or at least has a say in how that funding is utilized. So it's not totally without, you know, thought here but – and again I would say there's a larger – there's definitely a larger economy that's going on that – I'll leave you with this. This was by the head of the Washington State Real Estate Council. He said that COVID – I mean, he said Skagit County was a great place and people were finding out about it before COVID. Now that COVID's hit, everybody wants to be here – right? So they really want to get out of where they want to go and so it sped things up, is what he said. So we certainly feel that in the permit counter where people – today the last phone call I took was from someone leaving south Snohomish County and trying to move up here. That's the real thing on the ground, is, Hey, we'd like to sell out and find a place here and move to Skagit County. Anyway, real life stories. That's what we're dealing with in the trenches each day. Thank you.

Chair Candler: Thank you very much. Mr. Gill, is there anything?

Mr. Gill: Yeah, I just have one more slide. I don't have any fun slides with pictures or anything, but I just want to kind of let you know where we're at as far as next meeting and everything and remind you there's some things going through the Board of County Commissioners at the moment. And it's updating the building code references to the 2018 editions rather than the 2015 editions, and some of the local exceptions for Skagit County to those building codes, those State building codes. So that is happening right now with the Board of County Commission, and they are meeting on August 24th to deliberate on those. So I wanted to let you know that's happening. On that same vein, we have received five new petitions for next year's docket. So for the 2022 docket we have received five petitions. So the cutoff date was the last business day of July. And so lots more on that to come. We're still working on 2021. Just wanted to let people know.

And then next meeting is actually a special meeting. It's an optional meeting to take a tour of Bay View Ridge on August 23rd. I realize not everybody's going to be able to make it, but it's a good opportunity to see some of the development that Hal often brings on the ground and some of the things that all the code and all the paper that you all deal with actually means on the ground. So it'll be a nice chance to get out.

Commissioner Rose: What time of day?

Mr. Gill: It would be about 3 in the afternoon is what we're shooting for.

Commissioner Rose: And would we meet here and go on a bus or something, or –

Mr. Gill: No. So we're still kind of working through the Open Public Meetings Act issues, making sure that we do everything right. So more than likely we will have designated locations where we're going to have people that are doing the work and the Port to meet us onsite, and then we can either carpool in smaller groups – you know, less than four or five – to the different sites and pop in and pop out essentially – whatever works for you all. We'll have a map that shows the sites we're going to stop at. We'll record all the conversations when we do stop and have a group conversation, just so we can make sure we're making it available to the public. And it will be advertised. So that's the plan for the 23rd.

Chair Candler: I have a question about that.

Mr. Gill: Yes?

Chair Candler: I may have missed something along the line, but what is the reason for the timing of this meeting being right now? Is there something –

Mr. Gill: In August?

Chair Candler: Yeah.

Mr. Gill: No, there's one project in your docket that is starting with construction on a portion of the project. That was essentially one of the impetuses for trying to get out. There's no other meeting – right? – in August, and so the idea was – and we didn't have a retreat this year and so there's, you know, a chance to get outside of the table or the computer or the dais and try to interact in a little different way.

Chair Candler: Thank you.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Next formal meeting is September 14th and that will be again on Shorelines. And then kind of the last group of questions is I try to follow up on any requests or changes. This is the last meeting for Commissioner Shea, sorry to say. I really appreciate your enthusiasm and your youth that you bring to the conversation. It's been very helpful, and so I really appreciate it. And hopefully you'll join us on the 23rd so we can do this properly, but anyway, I just wanted to acknowledge that. I appreciate all your time and efforts.

And then I also wanted to just kind of throw this out there: The in-person meetings here in this room, the Board is pushing away from them for the time being. And so, you know, this is almost a day-to-day situation with COVID and so knowing whether we are going to meet on the 14th in this room is a little touch-and-go. So I can't be sure. We've got the virtual meetings down pretty well. Obviously this is preferred but anyway – so I just wanted to give you a heads up that that may change.

And that's all I had. Thank you.

Chair Candler: Thank you. And having reached the end of the Director's Update, we will move on to the agenda item Planning Commissioner Comments and Announcements. I'd like to start, if that's okay. Just following up on what came up at the beginning of the Director's Update, as far as examples – I was going back to what we were talking about earlier – I'd also like to see, if we can, some different lot *shapes* in our examples, because we've spent some time talking about long, narrow, and wide, and I think it would be important for us to look at how that looks for all these reviews. Thank you.

And then secondly, I'm very sorry to see Commissioner Shea go. I certainly understand, but it's been great having your perspective here. Thank you very much for your service.

And last but not least, I did also, even though it just came up in the Director's Update, I did want to talk a little bit about this combination Zoom and in-person meeting and how this is going from people's perspectives. It may – it sounds like we may not have a choice if the Commissioners are expressing some decisions about that. We did have some technical difficulties tonight, although that might just be unusual, but we're back to a mask mandate for everybody and I think that's causing some concern for people. Do other people have comments on that?

Commissioner Rose: I'll weigh in on that. It seems like when we're back in the mask mode we may as well be back in the Zoom mode. Seriously. I mean, it's –

Commissioner Knutzen: I'd like to comment too. I wear hearing aids. I spent \$15,000 over the years on hearing aids. It's still only partial hearing. I read lips. I didn't know that until people started wearing masks. I didn't gather 10% of what went on here today. I'd rather go to Zoom. If we have to wear masks, I'd rather do Zoom because you can see the people talking and I can get – I still only get 75% of it but I get a whole lot more than what I got here tonight.

Chair Candler: Okay. Commissioner Hughes, did you have something?

Commissioner Hughes: I agree.

Chair Candler: Okay.

Commissioner Henley: I think Zoom's preferable to the mask in person.

Commissioner Shea: I guess just, I like meeting people. I like being able to be in person, just because I can say simple things without worrying if I need to unmute or if it's a worthy thing to speak about. So I like having that comfort, but I agree if we're stuck here with masks, you know, if we're really going to, you know, put the virus down then let's just go home then.

Chair Candler: I think we've heard from pretty much everybody. I tend to agree. I didn't mind doing the Zoom, at least in the short term. I thought it worked pretty well. So I kind of appreciated that and didn't really see a lot of – other than just being nice to be here – I didn't see a lot of problems. So it seems like that might be a direction we would want to go in the short term.

Okay, moving on to someone else. Anybody else have some comments or announcements?

Ms. Hughes? Commissioner Hughes – excuse me.

Commissioner Hughes: I'll thank Commissioner Shea for his time again. It has been good to work with you and your point of view and your youth. But I totally understand that at this stage in your life there are a lot of priorities. So thank you for your time.

Chair Candler: Commissioner Rose?

Commissioner Rose: Yeah, thank you, Commissioner Shea, for all the same things.

Commissioner Henley: (inaudible)

Commissioner Knutzen: I only got to meet you before you quit!

Commissioner Rose: I won't be here on the 14th of September. My project won a national award so I'm going to go to Denver and accept that from the Department of Energy, so I'm excited about that. So at any rate, I have a good excuse, right?

Chair Candler: That's a wonderful excuse!

Commissioner Rose: That's all.

Chair Candler: Okay. Commissioner Knutzen, any comments or announcements?

Commissioner Knutzen: I have nothing. No.

Chair Candler: Commissioner Henley?

Commissioner Henley: Nothing from me.

Chair Candler: Commissioner Shea?

Commissioner Shea: Well, yeah, I just want to say thank you, everyone, for the opportunity. And it was not easy by any means, and I don't want anyone to think it is because it's a lot of work and a lot of responsibility. You know, I just have a lot of family issues going on right now that's kind of absorbing my mind and my time, and (I'm) just trying to keep the straight and narrow just with my own work. So I appreciate it, and if everything clears up in the future, which I hope, I'd love to come back. It's definitely a great opportunity and a lot of important stuff we talk about, and so I thank you.

Chair Candler: Thank you. Anything else?

(silence)

Chair Candler: Having reached the end of our agenda, we are adjourned (gavel).