

**Skagit County Planning Commission
Joint Discussion with County Commissioners
Deliberations: Farmland Ordinance
October 11, 2022**

Planning

Commissioners: Kathy Mitchell
Mark Knutzen
Vince Henley
Amy Hughes
Tim Raschko, Chair
Joe Woodmansee
Tammy Candler, Vice Chair
Martha Rose
Jen Hutchison

**Board of
County**

Commissioners: Peter Browning, Chair
Lisa Janicki
Ron Wesen

Staff:

Hal Hart, Planning Director
Sarah Ruether, Long Range Planning Manager
Jenn Rogers, Assistant Long Range Planner
Betsy Stevenson, Senior Planner
Will Honea, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (via Zoom)

(NOTE: The recording began a few minutes after the meeting started.)

Commissioner Kathy Mitchell: Chair, there's an error. They said that Commissioner Hughes made the motion and she didn't. That was incorrect. But it brings up a question anyway. Do we really need to put who did the motions and that kind of thing in the minutes anyway? Or just -

Chair Tim Raschko: In my experience, they generally are.

Commissioner Mitchell: Okay. So if you would fix that, that'd be great.

Jenn Rogers: Correct it to whom?

Commissioner Mitchell: I made the motion.

Ms. Rogers: There you go. Correction.

Chair Raschko: So who seconded it? I didn't hear. What is the correction to the minutes?

Commissioner Mitchell: The minutes say that Commissioner Hughes made the motion. I made the motion. But I don't know who – I think it was Tammy Candler had seconded it.

Chair Raschko: Have we got that? Is there any other discussion of the minutes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: If not, all those in favor of the motion, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Commissioner Mitchell: Jen wants to say something.

Chair Raschko: Those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Abstentions?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So the minutes are approved. And the Planning Commission will go into recess while we have a joint Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners meeting/discussion.

Chair Peter Browning: Great. At 6:02 we'll call the County Commissioners' meeting to order. It says here we want to do the New Planning Commissioner Member Introductions. I'm new so I know none of you, even people living here for quite a while. So if you don't mind, it would be just great to just do a quick introduction around the room so we know kind of – and we'll do the same for you, if you'd like. So want to start with Ms. Hughes?

Commissioner Amy Hughes: I came here during grade school. I grew up in south Mount Vernon and now I'm out towards the west on Fir Island.

Commissioner Mitchell: Kathy Mitchell. We came here in 1999 and we live on the edge of the forest and been loving it here ever since. I appreciate everything that you guys are doing collectively. Thank you.

Commissioner Vince Henley: I'm Vince Henley. I live in Anacortes. I've lived there for about a dozen years or so. I can't think of much else to say except that we *really* like Anacortes.

Commissioner Raschko: I'm Tim Raschko. We've been here since 1978 so we're still newcomers.

Commissioner Tammy Candler: Tammy Candler, proudly born in Sedro-Woolley, Washington, and I live there now north of town in the county.

Commissioner Jen Hutchison: Jen Hutchison. I lived in Burlington right on the edge of District 3. I've been there for 10 years now.

Commissioner Martha Rose: Martha Rose. I live in Sedro-Woolley now for seven years. Shocking!

Commissioner Joe Woodmansee: Joe Woodmansee. I was born in Sedro-Woolley. I've spent most of my life in Skagit County. My folks detoured to California for about 14 years while I was in school, elementary school and high school, and I'm glad to be back here. I came back in '77 and it's a pleasure to serve on this commission.

Commissioner Mark Knutzen: My name is Mark Knutzen. I've been here since November 3rd, 1952.

(laughter)

Commissioner Knutzen: Do the math on that. Fourth generation. I lived my whole life except when I was over at Pullman – best five or six years of my life – and I've been retired from the farm now, thank goodness. And now I'm doing volunteer work, which I guess is what this is, right? Thank you.

Commissioner Ron Wesen: Ron Wesen. I've been a Commissioner for 14 years now. Before that I worked on my parents' dairy farm with my four brothers, so we're fourth generation dairy farmer and milk about 700 cows, and last night I was driving a corn truck and was supposed to be there tonight but I'm here. I was born in Burlington at the hospital there so –

Commissioner Knutzen: Matthew General Hospital?

Commissioner Wesen: Yep.

Commissioner Knutzen: Fairhaven Apartments.

Commissioner Wesen: Fairhaven Apartments. That's where it is. And so that's it.

Chair Browning: Well, I'm Peter Browning. I've been in this county off and on for a good amount of my life. I actually grew up on an organic farm up in Whatcom County. We had a place that I lived in the summers most of my teenage years and worked at San Juan Island Cannery, if any of you remember that. One of the great pea canneries of our time. And I also went to WSU for four years and Western for four years.

Commissioner Knutzen: You did it in four, huh?

Commissioner Browning: Not very successfully, but yeah. It was three of the best years of my life. All right.

Commissioner Lisa Janicki: I'm Lisa Janicki. I married into a large clan here and have been living here since 1984 – because we lived a couple years in Alaska, which is my home state. And I'm serving and just completing my second term in office, so eight years. And, you know, I tell this story with my mom growing up a school teacher, a single mom, and the struggles it took just to do everyday life. And I remember the first house she was able to buy because I was in high school, a junior or senior in high school, and, you know, just what it takes to build the infrastructure for good community. But I also really support the social infrastructure too, because it takes all of that, I think, to raise and keep a community like Skagit County is. So this is very much home.

Chair Browning: I think a lot of what we're going to talk about tonight is just making sure that we all/you all understand kind of the areas of interest and the areas of focus of the Commissioners.

And so this has to be kind of an open discussion. I think that it's roughly – I'm overseeing a lot of the fish stuff and then Commissioner Wesen is always our go-to for agriculture and farms, as well as some legislative things. Commissioner Janicki is involved in forests, she's involved in roads, and she's involved in a whole lot of stuff. So we're going to each kind of just give you a little bit of an understanding of the overview of areas of focus for us. And then – but then we'll stop and answer some questions if you've got any clarity about kind of where we stand or what we think of the important issues. That sound good? Is that good?

So, Commissioner Wesen, would you like to start?

Commissioner Wesen: Agricultural issues: Like I mentioned, I was family and fourth generation. I definitely understand agriculture in Skagit County, how it's changed dramatically over the years. Things that farmers have to do to become economically viable in the state, economically viable. I definitely really appreciate what the Farmland Legacy Program has done and all the other nonprofits come in, where we're 14,000 acres and extinguish development rights that the property owners have chosen to sell off to the citizens of the county. Working in those things.

Another thing I want to make sure is we don't put undue regulations on our agriculture, because agriculture is a world competition. Most of it is commodities and you compete with everybody across the world. One of the challenging things, the dairy industry, two years ago the State of Washington – we've had a 60-year exemption from overtime and it's been – just agriculture didn't have to do any overtime. The law was changed two years ago and all of a sudden anything over 40 hours in a dairy is overtime. And so those are things that just dramatically increased the cost of production for agriculture in Skagit County. We just want to make sure we understand how that works in. I know other states in the country do not have that in agriculture. New York is starting to phase theirs in but they're still arguing on that. And California is the same thing. They've got a five-year, six-year phase-in. And it just makes it more difficult for agriculture in Skagit County to compete on the worldwide market. And we want to make sure in our zoning and other things we have that we aren't putting undue burden on Skagit County. Our drainage and irrigation is very important in Skagit County. That's one thing that made this valley what it is. If we don't have the dike districts and drainage districts we wouldn't be able to have the good farm ground that we have. And about 15 years ago they made most of the drainage districts also irrigation districts just to make sure they could use their infrastructure for irrigating during the drier part of the year. Those are some of the things.

I'm also on the Ecosystem Coordinating Board, which is a Puget Sound partnership group made up of the leaders of different groups/organizations doing what we can to work with Puget Sound salmon recovery. And so we deal with some of those issues (and) how it affects local government. And I'm definitely involved with the Clean Samish Initiative now. What we've done in Skagit County to help the fecal coliform out in the bay, and they keep the shellfish growers open. One of the concerns going on there is because the State Department of Health has – the restrictions they have on the Samish Bay, they aren't able to export in all the European countries just because of those restrictions and so we're trying to make it so they can get that ability to export internationally. Some countries allow them, other countries are using that as a lever not to allow the competition.

So those are generally some of the things we're dealing with. Just, you know, any other questions? I'll try to be open and any people have any comments or questions I'm here to answer them. Tim?

Commissioner Raschko: What's the nature of the restrictions on the shellfish that – did you say Department of Ecology?

Commissioner Wesen: It's State Department of Health. It's fecal – the Samish River is, like, three-quarters of the amount of water that goes into the Samish Bay, and so rain events we get a high flush of high fecals that go into the bay and they sample the Samish River at the Thomas Road and if it's above a certain level then they close down the bay until they get a lower number and then they can open it up, depending on how long the restriction is – usually three or four days. But usually it happens in the springtime when we have a big rain event, or in the fall the first two or three rain events. And “fecal” is any warm-blooded animal, so humans, livestock, wildlife, all those contribute – and dogs and all of those things contribute and so that's one of the things that the State Department of Health is looking at to help – for human health on food safety because people eat raw oysters and raw oysters have issues with _____ if you have ____.

Commissioner Raschko: Is Colony Creek still problematic that way?

Commissioner Wesen: It's one of the creeks that go in. It's not – they have a total maximum daily load in the bay, and I think it's three-quarters or something comes out of the Samish River, and Colony's another. That's the other main contributor along Chuckanut there, so, yes, it's one of them. But one of the questions is on the wildlife: Is it septic systems? Because we have a lot of older homes and so forth that are out there and that's one thing our Health Department's done, is going out and anybody in a marine recovery area is supposed to get their gravity system, septic system inspected every three years, and if you have a pump system it's every year. And we send out reminder letters to get people to do that. And when homes are sold that system has to be approved before it can be sold. So those are some of the things we're dealing with. But years ago, Edison – I mean, they had a lot of __ pipes just going into the slough and so years ago that was what people did, and now the restrictions are different. You have the changes.

Commissioner Raschko: Thanks.

Commissioner Wesen: That's always something we're dealing with.

Commissioner Candler: I do have a question.

Commissioner Wesen: Sure.

Commissioner Candler: It seems like a lot of the regulations that we get are sort of being codified into the statute – statewide – that come in front of us. Are you concerned about the legislature for the state using like a one-size-fits-all situation that doesn't work for Skagit County, or do we have good lobby groups? Like, what do we do about that?

Commissioner Wesen: It's unfunded mandates. We're involved in the Washington Association of Counties and that's one of the things that's always concerning to the counties, is the state coming out with a rule then the counties have to enforce it and make it happen. So yes, that is a concern. That's an issue we're always dealing with. And every county's _____. We have 39 counties in the state. East side counties, some smaller population. We're on the west side here with larger populations but we're between – you know, Snohomish County 880-something thousand; Whatcom County, 180, 190,000, something like that. So we're kind of in the middle of that. But Puget Sound, all the water on the west side goes into Puget Sound and with the Endangered Species Act and all those things they're trying to deal with they're trying to figure out how we can make sure all of Puget Sound has relatively stable or equal regulations. And that's always a concern to me, is if the rules are going to be across the state, why doesn't the state just say that's what it's going to be and the state can come out and enforce it. Why do they have local electeds trying to figure out how to do it? That's my own personal thought.

Commissioner Candler: Thank you.

Commissioner Woodmansee: I have a question. On these septic system issues, is there any state funding or local funding for people that would like to improve their systems that are not – that technically maybe they're grandfathered in because they're still functioning but they don't really meet the level that they should?

Commissioner Wesen: Our Health Department has different grants that everybody can get from the state and one of them is the ability to – I think last year we had \$100 or \$200 for putting a riser on them so you can easier inspect them, and the other one is to just to pay to have it pumped if you need to have it pumped. So there are different programs. We have worked with different property owners if there's an issue and they don't have the finances, the state has a loan program – so to upgrade their system. Generally you have to fail – so you voluntarily do your test or whatever and they write you up as a fail and then these programs are available. They're not 100% because now it's 20, 25,000 to put in a new system. And most of the problem is the drainfield, because a lot of places the drainfield gets plugged up or something and you have to move it to your alternate site, and in some places that alternate site was built over or they did something to it so now they don't really have an alternate site. But there are – we have the ability to work with the different property owners to make something happen. We'd rather deal with something instead of letting it fail.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah, some of the newer systems are very expensive. We're doing one right now that's – I think it's \$35,000. But the technology is pretty incredible so maybe, you know, we can lobby the state to up there game on help to some of these people. It would be a good thing. It's a long process but...

Commissioner Wesen: Yeah, and, you know, if you live in a city and you're on a sewer system then that's all sort of taken care of unless you're in Seattle and they have overflows. But it's just interesting how that works. But there are different grants available. There's concern, and our Health Department does a very good job – environmental health – to help people through their process. But as you said, the technology's increased – gotten much better than it used to be, but also to get that inspection – I know there's one company, there's only one person in the region that can inspect that type of system and it's difficult when they don't have very good customer service.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah, true enough! Thank you.

Commissioner Knutzen: I have a question about Samish Bay and Samish River. My memory goes back to the mid-60s. Back then, especially in the Lower Samish River Basin, lots of dairies, as you all well know. The houses there now, most of them were there back then. You go from about Friday Creek and I know there's more houses. I don't know of any developments but right on the river they might be putting ___ in there. Now the problem we have is there's an e-coli form level or whatever it is, they shut down shellfish. I don't ever remember that happening back in the '60s and '70s. Is there any history on this, like why we have problems now? Did people not eat raw oysters back in those days? That's the problem. I mean, if you eat raw – if you cook them, it cooks it away.

Commissioner Wesen: There was a big – four or five people got really sick twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago, and they were able to trace it back to Samish Bay. And so the State Department of Health is doing much more than they used to.

Commissioner Knutzen: But people must have got sick 50 years ago. Maybe they were tougher back then. I don't know. But, I mean, there's been – when they talk about all this, do they ever go back and say, Well, it was never a problem back then. What's changed? What's different?

Commissioner Wesen: The one thing that changes is technology changes on the ability to trace these things. And one thing on milk, they have zero tolerance for antibiotics in it. Well, now you can check one part per trillion instead of one part per thousand –

Commissioner Knutzen: Yeah, zero is smaller!

Commissioner Wesen: Zero is smaller.

Commissioner Knutzen: Zero used to be a part per million. Now it's a part per ___.

Commissioner Wesen: Right. But if the rule was set up there'd be zero for no trace and the technology increases the ability to check that. They _____ expand it. But I'm not a Health Department person. That's my theory.

Commissioner Rose: But isn't there natural wisdom not to eat raw oysters during certain months, like from June, July, and August? If it doesn't have the letter "r" in it – is that it? And now they want to sell them year 'round, so that's part of the problem too.

Chair Browning: _____. The water gets warmer. But also there's some discussion about what farmers are feeding, that they used to feed a lot of ___ pulp and a lot of silage and a lot of hay and a lot of grains, and the more grain you feed – in fact, they did that one study and it was Australia where they stopped feeding grains to cows for about two weeks prior to them – two weeks, three weeks before they were butchered and they had far fewer cases of E. coli that were related to them being butchered. So some of it has to do with the natural flora and fauna in cows. If they eat different, they're going to have different levels too. So there's a lot of pieces to this bigger picture of E. coli. But Ron's very right in that we're very careful in our acceptable limits – are almost nonexistent, like paper thin from – so that's part of it. But you're right also, Martha. Yeah, the old days we didn't eat them during certain months.

Commissioner Wesen: But the population's changed too. I mean, I graduated high school _____. Skagit County was about 65 or 60,000 people and now we're 130 so basically doubled. And as you get more people there's more chance of things happening.

Commissioner Rose: Right. I had some cooked oysters a year ago in the wrong month and got sick. And they were cooked! So it doesn't – you know. Any rate –

Commissioner Wesen: I'm not an oyster grower so I can't give you all the details.

Chair Browning: Any other questions?

Commissioner Janicki: The topic is – it looks like "resiliency" here. And given my kind of areas of expertise, I want to talk about timber a little bit. To me resiliency in timber and, you know, 85% of this county is covered in forestland, and how do we maintain a stream of wood to our mills to keep our mills going? How do we keep adequate forest practices in play so that our forests are not overstocked up on – I can tell you – the Blanchard Mountain Natural Recreation Area now, or natural reserve area up on top of Blanchard, you know, out of a working forest is so overstocked. It's what timber guys will call "dog-haired." And my prediction when they set it aside and hadn't

touched it – they hadn't touched it at all in 2008 when the Blanchard document was signed. It hadn't been touched for a long time. It's probably going to burn – either lightning or human cause.

But we have to, as a board of commissioners, continue to advocate for active management of our timber lands in this county. You know, some of that comes into the Planning Commission domain when the wildland-urban interface and intermix – the “intermix” word was new to me. But as those building code rules are put in place, it does affect, you know, where people are building, you know, up on a hillside and not necessarily just because Secondary or Industrial Forest comes into their backyard. Sometimes it's because they've chosen to build, you know, in the forest. And when we have – I mean, this is a perfect month to worry about it – incredibly dry weather, as we're planning for floods next month! – you know, we really have to be, I think, in agreement that a certain level of harvest has to happen to keep our infrastructure in place, to keep our forests resilient, and to keep building homes that require wood product. And sometimes, I'll tell you, my view of the world is informed or misinformed _____ by the number of businesses that my brothers-in-law and husband participate in. Going into Hamilton – in a different jurisdiction, not the county, thank God! – is 180,000-square-foot commercial building and they're building it all out of cross-laminated timber. It's kind of exciting, but when they did the math for what that comes down to it's, like, two million board feet of raw logs have to come in and the CLT panels are being fabricated over in eastern Washington. But it's exciting to see those things happen, and I think it's a perfect kind of project for Skagit County, you know, business and small town and traditional – I call logging – the timber industry is our heritage industry right alongside the agriculture. We're like the sometimes unwanted stepchild of the ag – “ag-forestry.” We have to say it together really fast. So that we get the protections that ag gets.

But being able to make sure that – again, that those actions at the state level aren't just sweepingly broad across our county, our resources, and that we have that voice down in Olympia because it does – you know, it does happen all the time. So I'm happy to be involved and kind of given the lead on things that are forest-related, but I know I've got both Commissioners very supportive in that realm. I sit on the County Road Administration Board. That, you know, and that is an organization that exists only in the state of Washington. None of the other 50 states have what we'll call a “local” roads board. The CRAB gets a protected amount of the motor vehicle fuel tax, and to that, part of it is distributed to a counties based on road miles and population. So there's a certain part that goes out and is part of the road fund that is used in every county, but part of it is for competitive projects. And so like the Bow Hill Road redo and thing and the big retaining wall below and above, that was partially a CRAB – County Road Administration Board – -funded project. And then the reason that that becomes so important is because in our world of moving toward electrification – again, being accelerated because of forces outside of what the County is doing – but electrification of vehicles, and it's going to reduce motor vehicle fuel tax. And so what that alternate source of revenue is is not protected by the constitution, because only **MVFT** is protected. And so how do we, as the County, continue to be able to do our big projects, have funding for our roads, and, you know, share in that statewide transportation need that is out there in keeping our systems in play?

And part of that system is – are the culverts. I think Commissioner Browning will talk about fish, but we were awarded through the last legislative session a million dollars to help the planning of the top – the prioritized culverts – fish passages – that would work in coordination with what DOT is doing in their realm and what the tribal leadership has identified as being the most important culvert project. So we got a million dollars, we're supposed to match a million dollars, but that cost estimate on the design of 11 fish passages just came in at over 3 million dollars. And so, you know, so for every dollar we take out of the road fund to pay for something like that those are usually the matching monies for, you know, much bigger grant sources. And so the, you know,

the need and the commitment to making fish passage happen – and part of it's the threat of – I mean, we've had tribal members stand here at this podium and say, We won the case against the State, Counties. If you don't get your – you know, your act together we'll move against you too. So voluntary but necessary, and in some places it makes a lot of sense, especially when you work in coordination. So, you know, I think that part of it when it comes in the – you have that conversation about, you know, where these fish passages happen, and when there's all within a road right-of-way it's – you know, it's one thing. I think Commissioner Browning can talk about what it means when it's mitigating for other projects that aren't here. But that fish habitat – fish passages in particular is an important part of what does happen and, you know, and what it takes to get those things planned, designed, and then permitted is a huge undertaking.

I think I'll leave it at that. I – I just – you know, when I think in terms of resiliency, I do watch the news, as we've all watched, and just the extreme weather events that had happened and – you know, Hurricane Ian, in particular right now, there was a very uplifting story about a small, little community not too far from Fort Meyers that's only 12 years old where they had invested in all underground utilities and had built to the Florida new building code the entire community – I think 2,000 homes maybe was this little community – and they suffered virtually no damage. They didn't lose electricity, they didn't lose fiber optics, their water worked. And they are just a short distance from Fort Meyers, that was pretty devastated.

So the investment in good building makes sense, you know? I saw it happen in Alaska over a long – the earthquake of '64 and, you know, what it took to ramp up seismic – not just retrofits but the new building code that came into place after we experienced that. And some people say, you know, it's too big, it's not going to matter, it doesn't make any difference. And in 2019 there was an earthquake that was a 9.1 earthquake that all that Anchorage lost in significant damage was an overpass – or an offramp failed off of International Boulevard. My sister was up there. She said it was the scariest earthquake she's ever lived through. And it was always a – you know, I mean, a regular event. You just felt it and you do the sway thing. And she said it was so long and it was so fierce that she thought her house was going to fall down, and she's up on a hillside. And there, you know, there was no damage there but overall there was – you know, there were no fatalities and no major structural damage.

So I think we have to invest in things that make us more resilient when – whether it's geologic, water rise, whatever you want to – you know, the threat of the day. But watching television and just seeing what happens when a community isn't prepared is – I mean, that's a warning to all of us. We need to be as prepared as we can and a lot of that happens – that works happens and starts right here.

Chair Browning: A question? Yes?

Commissioner Mitchell: So I'm hearing some commonality in some of the things that you all are saying and it's really no surprise that Skagit County matters. Our businesses matter, our histories matter, our support of our farmers, foresters, miners – everything matters. And it's quite a difficult thing that you guys are up against with, whether it's Olympia or Washington, D.C., or anything in between. So what can you practically do to help Skagit County businesses? That's not an easy one, but what can you practically do to help?

Commissioner Janicki: On a structural, functional – are you talking about building code structural basis, or more broadly in the –

Commissioner Mitchell: Probably more broadly and a little more generally, what can – you know, to help encourage the business? In other words, what kinds of things can you do to take the stumbling blocks out of the way, the roadblocks out of the way? Because it seems that every year that goes by, every decade that goes by there's *more* codes, *more* restrictions, *more* ordinances, not just locally but, you know, state, regional influences, national influences, and yet we're still supposed to be functional, viable, resilient. And it feels like we're getting more and more crippled, and what can we do to counter that?

Commissioner Janicki: So I'm going to have to talk more generally. First of all, you know, small business, I mean, all of us have been involved in small business or *are* involved in small business in some way. And before I ran for an elected office I was on the statewide board for the Association of Washington Business, and at that time they had almost 4,000 members and 95% of those members were under 100 employees. Ninety percent were under 10 employees. It was really focused on what does small business do. And the reason I say that is because I think a lot of times those small business folks can be the most nimble if they have even any kind of help or guidance through systems. So one of the things that we have just approved through EDASC is really to put entrepreneurial guides into place. A program called "Oregon RAIN" – "RAIN" is some nifty acronym. But, you know, having people with really great and brilliant ideas and they want to build something, make something. Nowadays it's *code* something, which is beyond my expertise. You know, and how do you get set up as a business and be able to do that? And this program is all about other entrepreneurs who have done that, who have probably run into some of those stumbling blocks themselves. Some are avoidable. Some you just need to know about ahead of time so that you can, you know, navigate that, but it's – you know. So supporting small business as an undertaking, supporting the Latino business outreach person is also another funded position through the County over to EDASC. Because there's a – I'll call it kind of shadow businesses that are running in our Hispanic community that really could be uplifted and helped run aboveboard in compliance with mostly licensing and taxing that usually gets people in trouble, you know, here. But the construction, the building, the permits, inspections and pieces, I don't know how to take that part away. From what I know, there's nothing extra that we have mandated as Board of the *County* Commissioners to put obstacles in front of businesses. And occasionally and sometimes we get complaints about what County departments will do in inspections. There's a, you know, an opportunity to intervene and sometimes pull back, but most of the stuff that is being enforced by County employees, whether that's environmental health with Public Health or the stormwater or the – you know, Jack doing building inspections – are rules that are not extra than what is, you know, what the minimum requirements are. So I get it. There's a lot. There's a lot more. If we just start talking stormwater, there's a lot of unhappy businesses out there right now today and some of them are pretty sophisticated about it. So I want to help the smallest business owner navigate it and we all have to work through it together.

Commissioner Wesen: I think one thing we can do is help them navigate the land mines, because there are issues that come up and some of it is that people just don't understand the way they answer a question puts them down this road or that road, and sometimes they don't have to make that decision. They need to look at all the other options so then they can make the good decision going forward. So that's always an issue when somebody buys a piece of property and they want to build something special. They go through all the work and engineering, architect to get it all done. Well, they want to move the house back 10 feet. It would have been the wetlands or shoreline, and they wouldn't have to do a lot of extra things but they didn't come and ask those kind of questions before they got too far down the road. So a lot of it is make sure people reach out to the agencies or the electeds and so help us help them understand the process. Because we don't go through it every day but we hear about it every day and we understand more than they do. Because a lot of these people, it's the first time they've ever gone for a permit and they

just don't have the experience. So I think that's one thing we can do to help them. But like Commissioner Janicki mentioned, we can't _____.

Commissioner Janicki: Or like digging in – building that septic system without having a critical areas review and not knowing that, you know, you just placed it too close to your neighbors' whatever. I mean, there's just – there's some things that are avoidable, you know, kind of large mistakes.

Commissioner Rose: I think a lot of it's education. It is, it is, because like you mentioned stormwater, and the stormwater codes have evolved and they help us avoid flooding. So we don't want to not do them, and when they are done properly they're no more expensive. It's just learning how to do new tricks.

Commissioner Browning: And kind of up at this level also, a lot of the businesses are telling us that they have high business difficulty finding qualified employees, they have difficulty finding people and keeping people. They'll train them and they'll leave. We all know how expensive that is. So our shortage of housing has really become a big part of this, and thanks to some of our builders right now we're getting some really good, affordable housing and some nice housing developments where younger people can stay. Because a lot of our younger people are now saying, I want to stay in Skagit County. I don't want to go down to Seattle. I don't want to go to another big city. So we're seeing that among our 20-year-olds and early mid-20-year-olds, but if we can't give them good housing so that they can work locally, they're going to live in Bellingham and go to the next job in Bellingham that comes their way. So that's been a real problem for us and that's one of the things. But at the same time, you're looking at three people who are really very committed to maintaining all of our farmland, to maintain our forestland as forestland and not let it become big developments. And so our role is to try to make sure that we help find developments in a place where – places where it's appropriate and where it can ____, but also make sure that our young people are not only living here, they're buying their groceries here, they're buying their clothes here, they're buying their products here. Those taxes come back into the county and it becomes just a huge benefit to all of us instead of letting them take fairly large paychecks and go to some other part of the state. They go to Whatcom County or Snohomish County. So we're really working hard to make sure that we have plenty of affordable housing over the next five years, 10 years, so that we can keep more young people here – not just because we love them but because we want them to spend their money here! But we also don't want this to turn into – everybody talks about don't make this the Rainier Valley or the Kent Valley – please don't make this the Kent Valley. It won't. We have such restrictions in place that we can maintain our farmland forever and ever unless we make some really massive changes in our codes, which we won't do.

So my role is to – just because Ken Dahlstedt was the guy that was taking care of the fish and they said, Well, Peter, that's not yours. But at the same time I grew up in a –

Commissioner Wesen: That's not what we said!

(laughter)

Chair Browning: I grew up in the Nooksack. Honestly, I wanted this because it's something that really matters to me. I grew up with those fish that were just everywhere in the river and we could fish constantly. I grew up fishing in the winter for steelhead, in the summer for everything that would possibly bite. So it has been troubling watching the reduction in fish in our area. On the other hand, this year has been just a fantastic year for sockeye and a pretty decent year for kings

and a great year for humpies, so we're starting to see some rejuvenation. We're still a long ways from being able to say it's a victory, but it is – we're working better with our tribes. We've got good relations with the Sauk-Suiattle, good relations with the Upper Skagit. We're working on better relations with the Swinomish, but at the same time you've got to remember that they've been mad at each other for about 4 or 500 years, and so we've got to work hard to get back in there.

Commissioner Janicki: They say thousands.

Chair Browning: *Thousands* of years. They will bring up stories that are so many generations before them that they're still pissed off about. So we've just got to remember that. That's just part of the relationship of getting back in good graces with the tribes. We're working on it and we're becoming pretty successful because we are showing that we have a very, very serious interest in them being successful in both their salmon recovery and also just being sure that we support the tribes.

Some of the problems we're having, though, with that are things like our culverts. We've got a lot of culverts going in. We've still got a lot more to go to make sure that we've got plenty of fish passage throughout our county. It seems like every month we hear about another one of two that need to be replaced, and sometimes in desperation. They're pretty expensive and so – and a lot of those come out of our money. They're not always going to be money given to us. Also we have to really find that really nice balance between farm and fish and make sure when we start talking about setbacks or buffers of trees and things that we don't do it to the detriment or the expense of the farmers. There's got to be some sort of agreement and payoff, because in some cases, you know, you could lose a pretty good amount of your property doing those buffers.

Commissioner Janicki: Talk to the loggers. They know how to do that math. They know how to do buffer math.

Chair Browning: Yeah. So, yeah, that's right. Your background is very much in logging. So we're doing the natural resources stuff, and being mindful of keeping good, strong business is important, but at the same time we do have to follow what we're being given by the State and by the federal government.

I think that in the big picture we are heading in a really good direction. You'll hear me talking about our proposal to not let there be mitigation. Tonight you're going to talk about that, and I think that's really, really, really important because – and the only thing I'll say about it – just because it's appropriate. We've done such a good job at keeping farmland safe and that can't be used for anything else. It's unnaturally driven the value of farmland down, making it very attractive to people who could come in and buy that same farmland and use it for mitigation. So people like Seattle City Light can buy up large amounts of land upriver and use that for mitigation because it's so cheap. And that's – we have to remember that that's the reason so we have to put some sort of mechanism in place so it doesn't become fair game for anybody who wants to kind of ____ their sins here and then by buying land and doing something with it that could be good farmland.

The other thing that I have been asked to be involved with, that I'm the Chair of the Board of Health just because of my background in public health for about 30 years, and also I was a clinical professor for the University of Washington School of Public Health for about seven years. So I spent a lot of years in public health so I am working in that role also. But I've got to tell you, we've had some really, really, really talented and smart people in our department *forever*. We've been really lucky to draw an extremely talented group of people because it's a great place to live and it's a nice place and a lot of our public health people are also very outdoorsy and they've got the

mountains, they've got the water, they've got the hiking, and they've got everything, so we've been blessed with that. We've had an exceptional group here forever and ever so to a large degree I just had to keep them happy and directed. But since I was no longer there, they were given a whole lot of money to deal with a lot of stuff that we never had to deal with before, and Jennifer Johnson, who's now our assistant County administrator, did a great job in kind of redirecting and getting us in a very, very good position from a public health standpoint looking at how to make sure that we encourage healthier other communities – the lesser fortunate parts of our community, encourage them, make sure that they stay healthy, they eat well, they exercise well, they have good access to healthcare so that they don't become extremely costly and it's not to the negative benefit to their family. So we've done some really good stuff in that respect over the last five years, seven years, something like that.

So for the most part, I'll just try to keep the fish coming up the rivers and the people somewhat healthy. Other than that, any questions? And growth. Growth is always going to be an interest of mine just because if we're not – if we don't – just quickly. I am a hospital commissioner also, and a massive proportion of our hospital employees live someplace else, and they're taking some *really* big paychecks somewhere else and spending them and so I'd love to see some of them back in our community. Part of our community – the Marcus Welby idea of the medical community that _____, and we always had that around here. The families lived here. They all lived up by the hospital so we always had this really rich hospital community. Tim, you remember that. Just all the doctors were there in our community. Now a lot of them are elsewhere, and we need to bring them back in and make them kind of – the doctors and nurses – actually doctors are becoming not as important as nurses and all the other roles in the hospital _____. Same thing with the teaching community – in your background, also in mine – from family. A lot of the teachers live someplace else. Good paychecks, good people, good family people. We want them back in our community. So that's my dream.

Commissioner Mitchell: I still have another question for you. If this is not an okay night for this, then for later? I saw that you guys finished up the Shoreline thing end of August.

Chair Browning: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Mitchell: And I think we're all still curious to see what happened, how you made your decision on that.

Chair Browning: She's behind you.

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah, I warned Betsy that I'd be _____.

Chair Browning: We'll let Betsy give her report and then you could ask us about the specifics after that. It is, to a large degree, it's at Ecology right now and Ecology still hasn't given it – fully given us the blessing, right?

Betsy Stevenson: I just came to be in the audience tonight, but this is fine. I appreciate it. It isn't to Ecology yet. I have to come up with 12 years' worth of Planning Commission meeting minutes and all the other advisory committee meeting minutes and all the stuff, so I'm working on it and we're hoping to get it to them as soon as possible. But there's a whole lot of material that they have to have that goes with all the documents that you guys reviewed. So it isn't there yet.

Chair Browning: Historically they're – how long is their timeframe?

Ms. Stevenson: Wow, that's hard to say because it's a comprehensive, too. It's going to take them a little longer. I think they have six months, according to what the Guidelines say, but I know they were taking longer than that. I know they're anxious to get us going and I know they're still working on a lot of things that I think they're going to share with us at some point before too long. So I think they want to get it done as well. I know they helped us through part of what we were doing just to keep it moving along and give us a better sense of what they were thinking about. The other question is a little more difficult for me, I think, but if there're specific areas that you're interested and wondering why they didn't uphold some of your recommendations, that's fair and I'd be glad to go back and do some of that research for you. I feel like I was fairly open with why I suggested what I did and why I maybe didn't agree with some of the directions that you were going and why I felt I was supported in our Guidelines and things. And I'm not saying that you guys did anything wrong. I think you did exactly what you needed to do to feel good about yourselves and your decisions.

But I don't feel like we did anything that might have been unexpected. I didn't tell the Commissioners anything that I didn't tell you. It was the same information and the same recommendations and the same sorts of things, so they did look at all of them. And I didn't bring any of it with me and I don't know them off the top of my head, but I would be more than happy if you guys want to – I would be happy to take care of it for you if you have specific items that you want to ask about and provide a list. Because we did go through your recommendations and we went through all the recommendations and all the things that we wanted to change with them and we had a table and we worked it through, so I can look those things up for you and give you a better sense. There were several things that they went ahead and took your recommendation over staff and over some of the things that we wanted as well. But I feel like I was pretty open. I didn't bring anything up to them that you guys didn't hear so they had the same information you did to make their decisions and they had the benefit of your study work as well, which you didn't have, you know. You just had the study work that we had done and what you did independently and for yourselves. But I'm not prepared to just try to go through it item by item and tell you what they did, if that's okay at this point in time. But I would do the research for you and come back if there are specific ones that you really do want to know, and I could give you the information and even maybe the times we talked about it and where it was on the tape so you could listen to the discussion yourselves. If that helps.

Chair Browning: We'll leave that up to Tim to get to you and ask for – if you want a special part of their – if they want you here for a meeting to take care of that. Perfect. Good. All right, any other questions of me? Yes?

Commissioner Raschko: Well, I've got three things then. I don't know they're so much questions as comments. But first I'd like to thank the Commissioners for allowing Kendra to continue with the Forestry Advisory Board. Most people don't understand how big a role she plays, not just for the County for the Forestry Advisory Board but on the statewide level as well. So hopefully you can keep doing that forever. I surely appreciate it.

Commissioner Janicki: You know, and to that end, Kendra just provided for us and we just signed tonight – it hasn't been scanned in – a response to the SEPA on the carbon project – the 14-day SEPA comment period that they would not extend. And so we'll make sure that copies of that go to Kendra so that she can distribute it to the Forest Advisory Board too.

Commissioner Raschko: Oh, thank you.

Commissioner Janicki: Yeah.

Chair Browning: And consistent with your respect for her, it was a fantastic letter. It was just great, so yeah, thank you. I'm glad you appreciate her work because we do too.

Commissioner Wesen: Just some – people will want background on that. Skagit County has about 85,000 acres in the Department of Natural Resources for us and Hilary Franz said they're going to take 10,000 acres that is harvestable and put it in the carbon sequestration. And our 85,000, roughly half of it you can't harvest anyway _____ and everything, the way I understand it, and so that potentially could hit us very hard if they take a good share of that 10,000 acres out of Skagit County. And the theory is there's going to be carbon credits, dollars coming back to the county, and that's one of the concerns we have.

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah.

Commissioner Raschko: I'd be concerned. Well, my second thing has to do with – where was I? – oh, you know, the fact tonight we are going to deliberate on Offsite Compensatory Mitigation Prohibition on Farmland, and on behalf of the Forestry Advisory Board again, I'd like to say that there has been some substantial withdrawals from the forestry land base in the past for the same thing – the licensing of dams. And generally it's been associated with wetlands so it has something to do with fish. And of course those wetlands need to be protected, but they're buying large parcels and those are generally in the valley bottom where the wetlands are and it's the most productive land in the county. And I didn't want to confuse this issue by bringing that up earlier. I certainly don't want anything interfering with just completing this. That's the Farmland Ordinance. But at some time it just seemed appropriate to give the same protections to forestland in this county.

And the third, I just wanted to elaborate a little bit because you mentioned buffers on farmland. And just so that people – this will take just a few minutes, please, if you bear with me – just to give an illustration of what it meant in timber. But unbeknownst to most people, timber companies actually have a very, very complicated inventory system all tied to GIS and they know everything that's growing on the land. And there's two categories. There's what you call available and there's what you call unavailable. The unavailable are those areas covered by mandatory buffers and places that might be slide-prone or other places that just aren't going to be in your operable acreage. So then you use some very sophisticated modeling to figure out with that available inventory what your sustainable cut will be. In other words, how much can you cut in a year and you're never going to deplete your resource? Okay? The size of that determines your cash flow. Your cash flow determines your value because basically timberland is sold based on a discounted cash flow model. You take 50 years of cash flows; discount it back: What's it worth today? That's the value, okay? When that goes down because you make bigger buffers your cash flow goes down because your cut's gone down. If that's gone down, basically then the value of the company has gone down. When the value of the company goes down, particularly if it's publicly traded, the stock price goes down. And in some places, like Sierra Pacific, it got to the point where they are not even in accordance with their loan covenants, you know? And this is a big deal. And so I actually ran Crown Pacific for a year during their bankruptcy. My company was contracted by the secured creditors and I ran it. And at that point, in the mid-1990s, 24% of all that land they own up here it couldn't be touched. Twenty-four percent. Now you just think about it if you're farming crops and all of a sudden you lost 24% of it, what that would do to your cash flow and everything else. And the thing that's alarming is right now what's going on in Olympia. They're looking to expanding these fish buffers substantially over what they already are. And so I just appreciate your bearing with me, because most people don't understand, I mean, the huge consequences of this thing. So thank you for listening.

Chair Browning: Well, thank you for that perspective, though. And those fish buffers are going to be expensive. And we're asking for the science to support the buffers, and that's an ongoing question and an ongoing push to say because the prevailing sun direction and all those things that should determine the buffers – the height of the trees – all those things are different that just aren't being discussed. And so we're asking for a little more kind of science-based decision-making, but we'll see how that goes.

Commissioner Raschko: We will.

Chair Browning: But thanks, Tim.

Commissioner Janicki: Mark has had a question.

Commissioner Knutzen: First a comment, Tim, on what you said about the buffers. You're absolutely correct. A couple weeks ago some ag groups got together and brought some legislators up here for a day or two on a bus tour. The farmers had gone out and put flags in their fields where the buffers were going to be and how much that was going to lose, and got the legislators – fortunately some big city legislators – and they were quite surprised at how big of an impact it would have on the loss of the farmland to the farmers, so I looked at that as a positive. I haven't heard of any reaction since then.

Also a question for whoever wants to answer it. We know that three Seattle City Light dams have been there between 50 and 100 years. Loss of salmon habitat, in my view, started in the late 1800s when the farmers first started putting dikes along the bays and the slough. And all of that went on in the 1800s and, you know, maybe early 1900s. But in my memory, the last one I remember was actually over on the Swinomish Slough with Shelter Bay. That Rainbow Bridge, to the left when you're going over that, it'd be the southwest, that used to be just big marshes and the Swinomish Tribe developed all that. But I'm not a fisherman but my understanding is fishing in the '60s and '70s even was – the fish runs were great. So I've never been able to connect the dots between building the dams, losing habitat, the fish decline. You can't connect them, in my view. Can anybody here connect the dots for me? Anybody?

Chair Browning: Well, there was a total loss of estuary, which is – and if you go out to the estuary areas. The salmon spawn are born upriver. They come down and they hang out in the estuaries –

Commissioner Knutzen: Right, right. I understand the process.

Chair Browning: And increased and improved estuaries have led to some of our increases. I think that that's a huge part of the increases we've seen.

Commissioner Knutzen: So it's increasing now.

Chair Browning: It's increasing now.

Commissioner Knutzen: Because of the new ones.

Chair Browning: Yeah.

Commissioner Knutzen: But that's not the population we saw in the '60s and '70s.

Chair Browning: No.

Commissioner Knutzen: So why the decline from the '70s to the '90s? Habitat didn't change, dams didn't change, but the population went down.

Chair Browning: Well, there's also fishing _ there's some –

Commissioner Knutzen: Maybe some nets or seals or –

Commissioner Wesen: The technology changes.

Commissioner Knutzen: Whatever –

Commissioner Wesen: Technologies changed quite a bit for fishing out in the ocean and so the technology's different there and there's so much – their lifespan is out there that scientists have no real understanding of how that works.

Commissioner Knutzen: Right.

Commissioner Wesen: The predators – seals and those things – are different numbers. There's all kinds of things but we're not a scientist –

Commissioner Knutzen: Right.

Commissioner Wesen: And so these are all the rules that are come down from the Endangered Species Act.

Commissioner Knutzen: They can't regulate those so they regulate the ones they can.

Commissioner Wesen: Yep, yep.

Commissioner Knutzen: Purely speculation on my part. But I know I'm being recorded so I'll stop there.

(laughter)

Commissioner Knutzen: I write myself a note – remember? Thank you.

Commissioner Mitchell: I can add one thing onto what Mark was saying. I saw there's a set of those flags still up. If you're coming down from Chuckanut Manor south on Chuckanut, there's a set of Burma Shave signs and there's flags out in a field. And you can see them both and it says something like, You see those flags? You see how far out they are? That's what the buffer looks like. It's impactful. If you want to go take a look yourselves.

Commissioner Knutzen: My brother had a field 37% of the acre. We got some wetter ground below the golf and country club there so we can put some ditches in, and you do the math. Thirty-seven percent. Who can make a profit after losing that?

Commissioner Mitchell: But what Tim asked was a good question. And I saw you guys nodding your heads but we took you sideways. He made the point of saying for this mitigation thing with

the farmland thing, Why wouldn't that be applied to forestry as well when we're trying to save our forests?

Commissioner Janicki: So I asked the Prosecutor's office that question when it came up in FAB – at the Forest Advisory Board – and the answer was that the ordinance that we're amending – this compensatory mitigation phraseology fits very closely with the wetland banking language that was done that was *just* about farmland, and to broaden that scope and where it impacts code and just what the public process is would – doesn't – it would require a whole separate side process. Which doesn't mean it shouldn't be done, it just couldn't be done in conjunction – it wasn't as easy as just saying so let's add Industrial Forest and Secondary Forest and, you know, and whatever else into the code language that was being proposed.

Commissioner Raschko: I surmised that and that's why I left it be ___!

Commissioner Janicki: But it was discussed. Yeah, it was discussed with Will Honea actually – was the attorney that I asked that very question to.

Chair Browning: The thinking behind it is catching on really well in our community. The people are realizing that is *is* our land, that we need to control it. It goes back to the discussion we had earlier about just the three of us have to work very diligently to maintain the integrity of our farmland, maintain – we want to keep our people living in the right part of our community and keep our forests safe. It *is* consistent with our bigger picture of maintaining our land and not letting it become fair game for people who can afford to come in and buy it, use it for their benefit but not for ours. So, yes.

Commissioner Wesen: But the last time, Seattle City Light – didn't they – 12,000 acres? Isn't that the number I keep hearing about?

Chair Browning: Yeah. Yeah.

Commissioner Wesen: So that was purchased in mostly timberland or the midstream of the Skagit and so forth. So that's a lot of acres.

Commissioner Mitchell: Twelve thousand?

Chair Browning: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Wesen: And because it's a government, they can pull it off the tax rolls and now they have property in Skagit County.

Commissioner Raschko: Can I offer one last point?

Chair Browning: You bet.

Commissioner Raschko: The 24% that you can't touch, you still get taxed on.

Chair Browning: No, absolutely. That was talked about.

Commissioner Janicki: At a highly reduced rate for forestland.

Commissioner Janicki: I see then in our notes that it says we're supposed to be talking about the 2022 Docket Additions that we did – and I'm looking to Jenn for a ___ – and Agritourism before we depart and leave you to a more productive meeting. But Jenn, the docket priorities – are they just pieces that we've added on? It's such a short docket. But we just amended the docket just to do some – I wouldn't call them quick fixes, but quick fixes since we only get to do this once a year with docketed items. It came to our attention during the evaluation of .09 economic development funds that the County oversees, and those investments have to be used for public infrastructure and have been used since – oh my gosh. Like, was that around maybe even like 2000? For the past 25 years? Or even early '90s. So anyway, progress had been built. It came up that courts are not specifically listed as eligible for these public infrastructure grants. It's about 2½ million dollars a year that's invested into various projects. The initial investment from the Commissioners through your commitment of a million dollars a year went to the Port's LLC with PUD that's called Skagit Net to do the broadband, the first runs of broadband. So that went to the Port. A number of dock improvements out at Anacortes Port have been done in conjunction with this. Because really it's the measurement of how much – as last money into a project, how will it create jobs in any given community. So anyway, we wanted to add language that specifically listed Port facilities as being eligible for those economic development funds. And those are generally awarded once a year in the spring, and we just wanted to make sure that our port commissioners and their projects are – that we've connected all the dots. So it's a language change for that purpose.

And then the County hydrogeologist language – Commissioner Wesen, do you want to –

Commissioner Wesen: The County Code says you have to have a County hydrogeologist. Well, we haven't had one since last January. We tried to hire. We haven't found anybody. So there are applicants who haven't been able to get their permits moved forward because the County doesn't have a hydrogeologist. So we wanted to change it to a County-contracted person, so somebody that the County contracts with so it's not a County employee. So that's just clarifying that. Makes common sense to me but for some reason it was very specific it had to be a County employee before.

Chair Browning: And the Agritourism: That's going to be taken up again tomorrow night. Agritourism is just – the farmers justifiably don't want people driving all over the roads in the middle of harvesttime plugging up the roads and being mad at tractors and things that go slowly and are integral to do a really good farming business. So we're just working on what would agritourism actually look like and how could we do it in a manner that is attractive so that people can come here and look. And a lot of it is around people trying to have wedding facilities and things like that – although you'll hear my cynicism that weddings were all delayed during COVID, so all of a sudden everybody wanted to get married these last couple years and it looks like a booming business when in reality it's probably going to die out about a year from now, and they will have all caught up to the masses. But that's just my cynicism. On the other hand, people do like their country weddings and so how do make sure that people don't just come up, buy a farm, pretend to be farmers, then run a wedding business? So we're making sure that you have to have a certain amount of real farming going on on the farm so that it does – so that you're not just using Skagit County again and not utilizing the farmland appropriately and using it just for wedding venues. So it's just kind of right now working on what the details are that would make – that would work well with our local economy, work well with our farmers, and at the same time reward some of the people like Samish Bay Cheese that are doing some great cheeses out there and make sure that they're not ruled out of business because of a farm-based business. So....

Commissioner Janicki: And with Family Farm Weekend that just happened, you know, you see the level of interest in the public coming to visit the farm – that farm experience, particularly with

their children or grandchildren is so important, you know, to a large farming operation. It's a nuisance to a smaller farming operation. It's a godsend to get cash in the door and brand recognition on their products. And so I think that's the part through this ag-tourism. And we're not going to solve it perfectly, but there is certainly a difference between what a large-scale farmer is doing and wants with _____ public, which is as little as possible, versus the Samish Bay Cheese place where, you know, if you can stop and eat cheese you're probably going to buy it there too. And, by the way, all those other little stops on the map that you are handed. I think it's really important work. I don't think we're going to come to a perfect solution. No one's going to be exactly happy, and that's probably – we probably have – we'll have found middle ground if that is what is accomplished.

Commissioner Wesen: And it's always a challenge. A wheelbarrow full of corn-on-the-cob and Walmart. Someplace between there is two different things, and where is it enough to have agritourism, where is too much? We're trying to balance that and that's why, you know, we docket it: To look at – to have this group and other groups look at it to see what the community thinks is the best way to handle it. And there's no question once you permit somebody or allow somebody to do something it's very difficult to take that away. And so that's the thing. You're getting the camel under the tent and at some point we've got to balance that. I mean, there are a lot of different businesses out there right now that under the current rules wouldn't be allowed to be there, but because they're grandfathered in they're able to do it. So those seem to be very profitable, but if there's 30 more of them would they all be profitable or would they go – economics handling. That's one of the things we have to be careful with. Mark?

Commissioner Knutzen: I'm anxiously awaiting our discussions on ag tourism, because every time it's mentioned it seems like – Commissioner Browning just mentioned ag tourism, wedding venue. I've been to three weddings in Skagit County, ag weddings. I've been to five or six in Whatcom County. I think three or four of them were in Haymouth. I have yet to be at a wedding in Haymouth where they're milking cows. The only connection is it's in farm country, it's farm scenery. It might be next to a farm, but I've never been at a wedding next to a dairy farm. The dairy farms are two miles away! It's a potato farm. Ag tourism: A week ago last Saturday, the Festival of Family Farms. I took my eight-year-old granddaughter. A beautiful day. Highway 20 there's a big farm there. Schuh Farms, all nice there. And Stephen Dahr, a third generation, used to be process farmers in '60s and '70s. Grew peas like we all did. The pea processors all are leaving. A lot of farmers turned to potatoes. Not every farmer has two or three million dollars to start a potato farm. We don't need any more potato farms in Skagit County, in my opinion. Their option was ag-tourism. Pumpkins? We went there. Two-hundred-and-fifty people there must have been there. The first thing we got on, the hay ride. Okay, you can buy pumpkins. They grow them all right there. We went on a hay ride through the field. They have a trail through the pumpkin field. And the tractor and the hay wagon stopped and the planter was there. They described the function of this corn planter. They take half the plates out because pumpkins don't need as much room and they got the plate – they got a bin of sweet corn that was growing on the other side and they gave everybody an ear of sweet corn. *That's* ag tourism. And that's a family farmer doing this. It does affect the neighbors. But do we need more potato farms? So when we look at ag tourism, I cannot connect the dots between a wedding venue and ag tourism. And that's something for us to discuss. So anyway.

Commissioner Vince Henley: Question: I've been hearing about the ag tourism thing for some time now, but I've never been able to determine who or what is the primary driver for wanting to structure ag tourism in Skagit County. Do you guys know who that is?

Commissioner Wesen: There are individuals that have come in and would like to do certain venues and our current code doesn't allow them to do it, and so they are asking what kind of things could be changed to get this thing or that thing.

Commissioner Henley: But that doesn't sound to me like a primary driver. That sounds to me like scattered individuals with a particular plan in mind.

Commissioner Janicki: Well, I don't think _____. I was just going to say I don't think it – I think – the scattered individuals is probably right. About 10 years ago it looked like there was a wave of people coming back to Skagit County who in their magic 30 or 40-year-old thing they had done something somewhere else. They had gotten educated, done something somewhere else, and wanted to come back into Skagit County and running a small, very specific, organic a lot of times farm – was their dream thing. Trying to figure out revenue streams that would work became that question mark. And so after – you know, whether it's the blueberry farm serving ice cream out of a case or, you know, this place – or I remember the produce stand that went in down by Conway and, you know, they could sell the stuff that was there but it was augmented with stuff from everywhere else, and that was like, Wait, that's not a thing. But so what has happened is small farm operations – retail operations – have been going on and everything's held in abeyance right now for enforcement because we weren't really sure.

(telephone call sounds in background)

Commissioner Janicki: How did you answer that without answering it? We want to say hi.

Commissioner Raschko: How do I dump them?

Commissioner Janicki: So anyway, so then I think it was much broader than just a onesie, twosie. It was happening and it was happening all over the county in different locations and it wasn't like a collective group coming forward and asking for it together. It was a very disjointed ask because I think getting farmers to all work together is kind of like getting loggers to all work together. They just don't do that. They go their own way.

Chair Browning: Vince, in answer, you're absolutely right. I mean, there are guys like Andy Ross, who has 12 acres and he's chosen to stay wholesale, not retail, because he can manage his crops, he can dole it out appropriately, get his sales set up. So he gets maximum dollars off his acres, he says, and he compares that to something like Schuh's that are selling to anybody who comes in the door. You lose the ability of the immediacy like right now the crop's perfect; I can get it out the door, get Charlie's Produce to pick it up, take it out and sell it to providers. So that is exactly – they're both looking at it from different directions and trying to figure out which is the most advantageous way to take 12 to 15 acres and a lot of hard work and make a decent living out of it. Guys like Andy have done a great living – made a very good living off ____ takes 12 acres, but he refuses to do retail – just wholesale.

Commissioner Henley: Let me make a suggestion, if I may.

Chair Browning: Sure.

Commissioner Henley: We here in this room are basically what you would call regulators. What we do is we propose and create regulations which govern how the county works, basically. What I would suggest is in terms of agritourism, we figure out what the basic objective is and then do

the *least* amount of regulation that's necessary to be able to meet the objective, and no more than that.

Commissioner Knutzen: I agree with you, but the hard part is, Whose opinion the most regulated? On this side, for example you have the fulltime, commercial, big-acre farmers that really – they won't say it out loud but they would like to not have anybody else come into Skagit County.

Commissioner Henley: Of course.

Commissioner Knutzen: On the other hand is the example I gave with Schuh Farms. He was a commercial farmer. He couldn't afford to be a big-acred process farmer. He started with a half-an-acre of pumpkins. So that's the ag person that I see. Where's the line do you draw what you can allow and not allow? Do you allow them to sell postcards? Do you allow them to sell coffee cups with their name on there? And I don't know where.

Commissioner Henley: I get back to my original point, okay? It should be the *least* amount of regulation – all right? – that's necessary to obtain the objective. The *least* amount.

Commissioner Knutzen: Mm-hmm. But in whose opinion? And that's my point.

Commissioner Henley: Well, we *here* are the people whose opinion it would be.

Commissioner Knutzen: Right, right. You know, we'll arrive at some decision and half the people are going to be happy and the other half aren't. Or maybe if you disappoint your constituents at an equal level, that's what you want to do.

Commissioner Henley: Mark, you know that's always the way it is.

Commissioner Janicki: You know whose quote that is!

Commissioner Knutzen: A former commissioner told me that.

Commissioner Janicki: Yeah.

Chair Browning: But also traffic patterns and things like that are really, really an important part of this and so making sure that it can be successful and not have a bunch of offshoot traffic patterns that throw the farms into a tizz – for good reason, that they've got a lot of cars. So you're right. Figuring out what the intent is but then control it geographically, but necessarily product-wise, might be the most _____.

Commissioner Henley: We say whatever control is necessary to achieve the objective.

Chair Browning: I think the geographic control is probably going to be the most important part, just to make sure that we can keep our primary farm roads from being congested during serious farming times.

Commissioner Henley: I think we should be wary of what I call "subterranean conversion of farmland," where we actually end up being more of a wedding venue than we end up being a farm.

Chair Browning: It would not serve Skagit County well. You're absolutely right.

Commissioner Henley: I would *not* like to see that.

Commissioner Janicki: So I just want to be on the record as saying through this ag tourism study – and I thought the preliminary data was coming out – wedding venues is not an ag-related event. I don't think it is. I don't think it belongs in that framework, and so – but I'll tell you we're up against it because you have nonconforming locations right now and the one petitioner application that's in front of this commission is really started out as a wedding venue on ag land, but it was called something much different. But now wanting to expand on, you know, the other side of the interchange. We are up against it all the time. How do you keep agriculture as the productive, you know, business that it is and minimizing conversions? Converting to wedding venues is not a good idea, you know, as much as people like to get married out in a field. But I do think that the revenue streams are very different. The business model is very different between a large crop producer versus ones that have to rely on value-add. And if we're not going to allow them to do it at that site, then what? And I know some of that conversation is, So why isn't there an ag center up at the Port, you know, by Chuckanut Brewery and all those other places, or something else? That's that – you know, there's magic in it but the business model – if the business model is the same, this would be a lot easier answer to come to. But it's not. So there's going to be some art _____ has to happen here as how to accommodate all. But not everything.

Chair Browning: Kathy?

Commissioner Mitchell: So a lot of what's been said I've been running through my mind as well, and we've all talked about this. I think Jenn's – one of her first meetings we touched on that. So what you guys are up against – and I think the whole county is up against – is what's going to be used where/how, and what the definitions are. And the most simple thing right out of the get-go is we want to support our businesses. We want to make Skagit viable and those kinds of things. But how can we keep calling things what they really are instead of substituting a name and calling them something else just to make it easy? And it might be harder on – I'm saying "us" collectively; I mean the whole county. Heaven forbid you and staff having to deal with this legal – ___ for the wedding venues themselves. Those are important businesses too but can't they be treated on their own situation? I mean, I realize that's a big thing to figure out how and where it can be done, but to lump it under agritourism for the sake of ease, which really is what this sounds like, it's too easy and it's going to cause more problems than letting it go that way. You're going to lose people doing that.

So I don't have any answers. I really don't. But it seems like the definitions and where and the hows and the whens are going to be a big deal. And when – I'm going to try and put it on another plain. If we're playing a game on something, changing the rules and the definitions midstream's going to throw everybody for a tilt. And that's kind of what's going on with this situation. And I remember the first time ag tourism was brought up that I remember it – and it turns out that I was two series late not knowing about it because they said history had happened before – was Kirk Johnson's last day. That might have been eight years ago or nine years ago when he looked at us and all and said, "Agritourism's coming." And I think that was a good – I don't know, guys – eight years ago, six years ago, something like that? So this has happened time and time again and so I don't know what to say, but if there's some way you guys can drive the truck on helping with how things are going to be really defined for the proper uses and for what they really are, that might make a difference.

Chair Browning: Ms. Hughes?

Commissioner Amy Hughes: If I could interject: When I look at all these issues – all of them – I am thinking about tomorrow. My husband and his brother started on their own and they started because a farmer that was going out of business needed to sell their ground. And so they were able to jump into it. So my point of reference in all these issues is how do we keep Skagit County so the next farmer up can do their job? Because farming – every generation has to change it up somehow. How do we keep our agriculture base open for the next farmer to come up and do it affordable? Like you said, smaller farmers need to be able to buy ground. And when it's starting to run at California prices that puts us out of the price point as far as staying in agriculture. So that's just how I look at things, is: How do we keep Skagit County for the next farmer up? Because it may not be multigenerational period.

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah.

Chair Browning: Yes?

Commissioner Jen Hutchison: When I think about the wedding side of it – and I hear everybody's points on this – perhaps Christianson's isn't a good example because they're probably not even agriculture land. They're probably just commercial-based there. But they have a barn. They rent it for parties. You can call it a wedding. You can call it a birthday. You can call it a graduation. You can call it a prom.

Commissioner Wesen: What's it zoned?

Commissioner Hutchison: It's a barn!

Commissioner Wesen: What is it zoned?

Commissioner Hutchison: I'm not exactly sure. That's a very good point. I should have to check that first. But the idea I'm having is a farmer with a barn could rent it to people to have parties. And the way Christianson's operates that is that they have that renter, that person sign their little agreement, and then they go get a permit from the state to have those people there and they insure it themselves. So that might be an aspect to allowing a farmer to do such a thing, depending on their zoning, I suppose. I'd have to look into it more, but I just wanted to suggest that.

Commissioner Knutzen: Do you know does that fall under agritourism? I mean, does that –

Commissioner Hutchison: Is it tourism? That is the question. I understand what you're saying.

Commissioner Henley: I get the tourism part. I'm not so sure about the agri.

Commissioner Knutzen: Yeah, well, I mean – and I'm not saying I'm opposed to everything that isn't commercial wholesale agriculture. But where's it belong? Does the wedding venue regulations belong in agritourism? We'll discuss that when we get into this and, like you say, ____, I'm not saying we should ban all ____. But where's it belong?

Commissioner Hutchison: (unintelligible)

Sarah Ruether: We don't actually permit a wedding. We permit special events. So if something is permitted, it's a special event. So we're not calling it a wedding – and you can get up to 24 a year – but we don't have anything in code that says you can't have a wedding.

Commissioner Hutchison: And they can simplify things.

Ms. Ruether: It's more general than that, okay? Not to say that all of them are necessarily permitted.

Commissioner Knutzen: Well, this kind of reminds me of the Bertelsen Winery docket rezone that we _____. I mean, it doesn't really matter in my eyes if technically it's ag tourism or not. If there's a place for it in County regulations where it can be permitted or not permitted or regulated – whatever level we decide or they decide – I don't really care where it's at, which box it's in. And I'm not saying all of this stuff should be banned either. And boy, I'm glad all we do is make recommendations here!

(laughter)

Chair Browning: On that note, it's now 7:30 and most of our _____ has been brought forward. So if there are no other questions, we are at that point.

Commissioner Wesen: I just want to say, you know, we docket things and all that it means is we, the three Commissioners, vote to put staff and you guys to go look at it in more detail, and then you'll make a recommendation to us. Just because we docket it doesn't necessarily mean we're going to vote yes or no because we don't know exactly what you're going to come up with or recommendations. So I want you to feel comfortable with what you think is best when you make your recommendations. I've watched all the different Planning Commission meetings so I hear your conversation, what you're doing, so keep doing the good job you're doing. I really appreciate that. Feel and make your discussion how you feel comfortable so we can. The three of us get to make that decision based on how we feel – if we want to go forward, and what the public input is on that. Keep up the good work. I really do appreciate it.

Commissioner Janicki: I agree. The Planning Commission – your workload is, you know, more than any of our other advisory committee's, and the breadth. I mean, it has both breadth and depth, and so I really appreciate – the fact that you're all here tonight, that means a lot. But the fact that you come to the regularly scheduled meetings and participate and are ready, and I know by the discussions that you are ready to really, you know, vet the issues before. I mean, the goal of putting good planning in place is, you know, is to avoid chaos in the end. We don't want to overly regulate but we want – you know, we want to have a vision of what that outcome is in the long run. And through your help we evolve, the planning rules evolve. And hearing it tonight, I mean, we all have Skagit County at the core of the why – why we're doing this is, you know, we want this community to still be here in the generations past the time that we are here. So thank you.

Chair Browning: I appreciate all of you. This has been really good. I've enjoyed watching the meetings, but I really appreciate working with both Commissioner Wesen and Commissioner Janicki. This has been great for me. They're both very, very incredibly thoughtful and they have the best interest of Skagit County in mind always, as do I, and we're all – this is kind of enough here that we've been here long enough. This really is our home and we really, really care about maintaining agriculture wherever possible and forestland – “slow agriculture,” I think we refer to it. So this is all – and all the discussions about fish: We need our fish, we need our agriculture, we need our forestry, we need people living here that want to be here and can find decent housing so they can work here, live here, have their kids here, and grow old here. Those are all things that really matter to us and so with those kind of being the underlying motivations for most of us being on this, being the Commissioners, I think we are in decent hands, especially with you as our

advisory group. So wish us well as we will wish you well. And Vince, I agree with you. I think that just get down to the basic core of what we need to protect and then let the business find out what the people are willing to buy and what becomes a business is salable. But at the same time we still need to define the parameters and then let – as my father would always say, Let capitalism reign within those parameters. So all right. Well, thank you.

So we are going to adjourn our County Commissioner meeting (gavel).

Commissioner Knutzen: For me, the pay we get makes it all worthwhile.

(laughter)

Commissioner Janicki: I'll double that pay for you, Mark!

Planning Commission Chair Raschko: All right, we'll come back at 7:38.

(break)

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Mitchell?

Commissioner Mitchell: I'd like to make a motion. We *are* in deliberations, correct?

Chair Raschko: We *are* in deliberations.

Commissioner Mitchell: Okay, I'd like to make a motion. I move to accept the amendments to SCC 14.04 and 14.16 regarding offsite mitigation on ag lands, as proposed.

Unidentified female Commissioner: I second that.

Chair Raschko: It's moved and seconded to do that. I hope – hopefully staff got the – are you able to repeat back to us the motion?

Commissioner Mitchell: I can. I wrote it down so we can do this.

Chair Raschko: Okay, great. All right, it's been moved and seconded. Is there discussion?

Commissioner Woodmansee: I have a comment.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead. Commissioner Woodmansee?

Commissioner Woodmansee: If you went back in the record, you could potentially get the concept that I didn't support what was going to happen here in the original meeting when we talked about this. But – and I missed the last meeting – but I went through and read all of this and researched it and stuff and so I do support what we're trying to do here, and I just want to go on the record saying that. And I do think that farmland and forestland are two of the more critical attributes of our county and so I think this is a good idea.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you. Commissioner Knutzen?

Commissioner Knutzen: Yes, I will second what Joe said. I strongly support this resolution. The comments that we received on the attachment – 69 pages. There were 35 written comments.

Thirty of them were for it, five of them were against it, but in the staff report we got they kind of went point-counterpoint and rebutted or explained every argument that the other – the people were opposed to it had a very good response to that. The one comment I liked the most was “The large scale” – “Farmland is too important” – “The proposed amendment does not ban habitat projects on land zoned NRL. It only prohibits offsite compensatory migration that involve large-scale habitat projects on Ag-NRL lands.” So projects can still be done, just not for offsite mitigation. And the biggest point the people against this were, We need more projects. Well, we can have more projects, and that was the deputy prosecuting attorney, Will, explained that very well two weeks ago. It doesn’t eliminate this. It just eliminates it for offsite compensatory reasons. So I strongly support keeping this ban on.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Anybody else?

Vice Chair Candler: Similar to Joe, I – my comments weren’t really negative, if they came off that way. I think there’s no question and I fully support it.

Commissioner Rose: The same. I fully support it too.

Commissioner Henley: I also fully support it. I think the handwriting was on the wall and the amount of commentary we received was overwhelmingly in favor of making it permanent, and I think we would be remiss to ignore that, you know.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Commissioner Mitchell?

Commissioner Mitchell: I think in all the materials that we got from staff, legal, and the comments both pros and cons gave us a multitude of reasons to keep this in place permanently.

Commissioner Hughes: Call the question.

Chair Raschko: Okay. I’m not going to repeat the motion.

Commissioner Mitchell: Do you want me to read it for you?

Chair Raschko: Okay, all those in favor of the motion, please say “aye.”

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: And those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: And are there any abstentions?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So that carries unanimously. Thank you very much. We need to turn then to Findings of Fact. And would anybody like to start?

Commissioner Mitchell: Chair, I’ve got some ready to go, if the group wants to hear them.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead, please.

Commissioner Mitchell: I've got seven and I'll go through the first three and then stop and see if anybody has got something else.

"Critical mass of farmland is required to support farm practices including crop rotation and ag-support businesses."

Vice Chair Candler: Could you just –

Commissioner Mitchell: And I'll go slow for you.

Ms. Rogers: _____. "Critical mass of farmland is required to support..."

Commissioner Mitchell: "...farm practices including crop rotation and ag-support businesses."

(pause)

"A pattern of significant, steady loss of farmland has been documented due to development..."

Ms. Rogers: "A pattern of study..."

Commissioner Mitchell: I'm sorry?

Ms. Rogers: "A pattern of study..."

Commissioner Mitchell: Oh, yeah. "A pattern of significant, *steady* loss of farmland has been documented due to development and other conversion."

Next? "The Board of County Commissioners found it absolutely necessary" – quote – "that any conversion of prime Skagit agriculture land"

Ms. Rogers: Farmland?

Commissioner Mitchell: Where are you?

Ms. Rogers: "...that any conversion of Skagit County farmland..."

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah, "Skagit agricultural land..." I'm quoting them so I'll make it exactly.

Ms. Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Mitchell: The quote says "...that any conversion of prime Skagit agricultural land be highly likely to deliver an increase in harvestable, anadromous species while minimizing impacts to agriculture and farmland." End quote.

Chair Raschko: Before you go on, I'd like to ask Jenn if she has the ability to zoom in, for those of us who are age-impaired.

Commissioner Hughes: It's the hardest thing about not having the –

Commissioner Mitchell: I can't see it either!

Chair Raschko: Thank you.

Ms. Rogers: Okay, so I don't think I got that quite right. So "The Board of County Commissions found it absolutely necessary" – quote – "that any conversion of prime Skagit County agricultural land be highly likely to deliver and increase and harvestable..."

Commissioner Mitchell: "...in harvestable..."

Ms. Rogers: "...in harvestable..."

Commissioner Mitchell: "...anadromous species while minimizing impacts to agriculture and farmland." Yep.

Vice Chair Candler: Is there an extra word – "County" – in there?

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah.

Vice Chair Candler: No, but the quote you're reading doesn't have that word.

Commissioner Mitchell: Right. Take out the word "County," please.

Ms. Rogers: Oh, thank you.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you. She knows her stuff.

Chair Raschko: Please continue.

Commissioner Hutchison: Okay. "This amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan by its vision statement to protect and conserve agricultural resource lands and to continue to be viable today and into the future, with a goal to ensure the stability and productivity of agriculture in Skagit County."

Chair Raschko: Anymore?

Commissioner Hutchison: There's also, as a separate note: "Included in the Comprehensive Plan there's guiding principles to protect agricultural land resources by minimizing the loss of the resource, by preserving agricultural land for agriculture uses, and by limiting new, non-agricultural uses and activities on agricultural resource lands."

That's it for the Comprehensive Plan ___.

Chair Raschko: Okay, would you care to continue?

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah, I've got some more – unless somebody else does.

Vice Chair Candler: I have one.

Commissioner Mitchell: Go ahead.

Vice Chair Candler: "Skagit agricultural land has a greater value than its dollar figure would" – what's the word I'm looking for?

Unidentified Commissioner: “Indicate.”

Vice Chair Candler: “Indicate.” Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Done?

Vice Chair Candler: Yeah, I’m done.

Chair Raschko: Kathy, do you wish to continue?

Commissioner Mitchell: “The amendment only prevents large-scale habitat restoration projects done as offsite compensatory mitigation for environmental impacts occurring on non-Ag-NRL lands.”

Chair Raschko: You got more?

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah, I’ve got more. And if you guys don’t like them, just say so.

Chair Raschko: Oh, we’ll go through them another time.

Commissioner Mitchell: “Large-scale, programmatic habitat enhancement often envisions the conversion of farmland, adding to further loss of farmland.”

Commissioner Hutchison: “The Growth Management Act encourages conservation of productive agricultural lands and discourages incompatible uses.”

Ms. Rogers: Hang on – “encourages”...

Commissioner Hutchison: “...the conservation of productive agricultural lands and discourages incompatible uses.”

Chair Raschko: Anybody else?

Commissioner Mitchell: She’s got another one.

Chair Raschko: Oh.

Commissioner Hutchison: “The Countywide Planning Policies encourage the conservation of productive forestlands, productive agriculture lands” –

Ms. Rogers: Hang on, hang on – “Encourage the”...

Commissioner Hutchison: “Conservation.”

Ms. Rogers: “Conservation.”

Commissioner Hutchison: “...of productive” – we’ll just say “agricultural lands and discourages incompatible uses.”

Chair Raschko: Okay, Jen?

Commissioner Hutchison: That's all I had.

(several incomprehensible comments from several Commissioners)

Commissioner Mitchell: What I was trying to do was to go through all the comments and information that's given to us by everybody and pick out some things that would seem to matter to the whole decision-making process.

"The amendment is needed to advance the County's obligation to protect Ag-NRL lands from inappropriate conversion to non-agricultural use."

Commissioner Henley: Can we make a modification of that?

Commissioner Mitchell: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Henley: "A permanent amendment."

Commissioner Mitchell: And the last one, I don't know if it's good or not, but I'll read it and see what you guys think. You can shoot it down if you don't like it.

"Farmland can be easy mitigation for large outside entities that create undesirable incentives that target Skagit farmland for acquisition and conversion as mitigation for distant and offsite environmental impacts unrelated to farming."

Vice Chair Candler: Can we consider changing "easy" to "inexpensive"?

Commissioner Mitchell: Sure.

Vice Chair Candler: Or "affordable" or some combination of "easy" and "affordable"?

Commissioner Mitchell: I was trying to – whatever you think's good.

Chair Raschko: "Convenient"?

Chair Raschko: Okay, Amy?

Commissioner Hughes: I'm reading from the staff report: "Skagit County's principal concern and interest in this issue arises from the desire to end 30-plus years of conflict over fish and farms, which appears closely connected to offsite mitigation spending and the financial dependency it has created. Adaptive management practices need to be used" – oh, before we start that one, I want to add something in front of it and that will go right behind it. Let's stop on the first one and let's start this on a 13, if you would.

At the beginning of 13, before "Adaptive": "Nonproductive projects need to be reviewed and efforts to correct inefficient results need to be prioritized." And then the "Adaptive management practices need to be used and a 30-year review period could be considered for this."

You can go ahead and go to somebody else and then I have one other _____.

Commissioner Rose: I have a comment about number 11. I don't like number 11 because it's stated as if it's a positive aspect. The way it's worded, it sounds like, Oh, farmland can be affordable or offer an affordable opportunity. I just don't like that wording.

Commissioner Mitchell: I was trying not to take a potshot, but if you can help me with words?

Commissioner Hutchison: "Meaning to discourage."

Commissioner Rose: It's –

Vice Chair Candler: Right, so putting "target" earlier."

Commissioner Rose: It's easy prey!

Vice Chair Candler: "Farmlands and targets," or something. "Farmland" –

Commissioner Rose: Well, it's –

Vice Chair Candler: "...can be targeted for acquisition due to being affordable."

Commissioner Rose: Yeah, okay. Thank you, Tammy. I think it's an easy target, yeah. I think there's a lot of repetition in these.

Vice Chair Candler: I think we should put "targets for acquisition" or something. I don't know, maybe not.

(several mostly inaudible comments from Commissioners about verbiage)

Commissioner Woodmansee: Well, you could say "Farmland can be targeted as an affordable opportunity for mitigation for large outside _____." So what you're saying now is you don't want it to be a target. So the first sentence starts with you might think you're saying something positive but you're not. It's a negative really.

Vice Chair Candler: I agree.

Commissioner Woodmansee: So it just said farmland can be – like, the 11 goes away because that's saying the same thing that 12 said, right?

Ms. Rogers: Well, I just moved it down so I could keep the language and reword it.

Commissioner Rose: Most people view the word "targeted" as a negative, so that works better.

Commissioner Hutchison: Right, and _____.

Commissioner Woodmansee: You could just swap 11 for 12, or take the last part of 12 and add it to 11.

Commissioner Mitchell: Say it louder.

Commissioner Woodmansee: You could swap 11 for 12 or add the last –

Vice Chair Candler: She's adding the last part and then she's going to get rid of 12, I think.

Ms. Rogers: Okay, I'm tired so you're going to have to all agree.

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: Okay, why don't we get the last one down and then start at the beginning and we'll go through them all, rather than jumping around. Okay?

Commissioner Hughes: So are we stopping at 15 of these?

Chair Raschko: No, no.

Commissioner Hughes: You just want to review these and then go forward?

Vice Chair Candler: No, you said you had another one. He wants you to –

Chair Raschko: No, let's get them all listed and then we'll go through and review them all.

Commissioner Hughes: Okay. This is going to take a quick minute for me to do, if you don't mind. Could you put up the slide of the map of the Skagit River? Great, okay.

Months ago – and I don't remember if everybody was here – I went into how vibrant the Skagit River is. And I started up at the mountain crest where our rivers start and I pointed out that you look at our Skagit River; it starts clear up north into British Columbia and it comes down through Ross Dam, the other dams, and proceeds. There it connects up with the Sauk-Suiattle River that comes from clear south into Snohomish County, about even with Marysville, around Glacier Peak. That converges and comes up, and from what I have been able to glean – but we could work on our history in Skagit County a bit – about 10,000 years ago there was a lahar that changed the river, and it funneled it all into one river system, which we call Skagit River. So that's where the Sauk-Suiattle (is) and then there's Rockport. And then from there, this vibrant river that was created from all those Cascade Range – and now I understand why it's called "cascade," because the water trickles from the very top all the way down it; it all converges into our valley. It comes down our valley and it winds through different sections, and that's the middle part, and it goes through Concrete, where Baker Dam comes into, so you've got right under the south side of Baker we get all that water. And it comes down through Concrete. So all that water, as we saw in November, comes gushing down to our valley floor. And it works its way through Sedro-Woolley, it goes into the Nookachamps when it tries to get through Mount Vernon, and eventually it comes out right – if we could blow it up. The parts where you see in yellow and red, at that point the river forks. It quit going straight because least resistance. That's where water wants to go. It forked into two different places and it created Fir Island. And again, if history is correct, besides La Conner that was kind of the first place for settlements. There was a place called Skagit City on the north end of Fir Island and it was a vibrant place. And the reason that people weren't coming up and down the Skagit River is two log jams and they couldn't get past. So that's where the agriculture center between that and La Conner, as I have been able to glean history, really got going.

Okay, so then from there – if we could go into the next slide – this kind of shows – start at the bottom one, if you would. Okay, that one. This kind of shows, if you can see through all of that, at the very top is where it forks and the river goes southwest and it goes south. And then you have a triangle pie, which is Fir Island. So then if you could go back up to the next one. So at the mouth of Fir Island, at the mouth of Skagit River at the south end and the west end of Fir Island, is what

we call Skagit Bay. And Skagit Bay is also a very vibrant place. The water comes pouring down through that. And it works with all the sediment, the lahar, and it changes and it merges and it shifts. Within the last couple – or let's say the last 10 years, but since a lot of this research was done – the river used to go – if we could go to another slide, maybe a couple – the river at the north fork – well, you can see out there to (the) estuary, so first of all the estuary goes Camano Island to Whidbey Island. And if you go out there at low tide you almost think you could walk there across to those islands. And you can see that estuary build up there. Then if you could go to the other one? So do you see where Skagit River comes out of the right center and it comes over and it heads straight south? Ten years ago it used to go northwest. But it changed its mind and it decided to come south, and that's that little "U" you see right there. That fact that that river did without anyone telling it to do has changed the game on possibly our estuary studies. That's where the Chinook – we read about five – and again, I've learned this, so if I'm incorrect we need to change what I say through research. The Chinook are the ones that like the south end of Fir Island. All the other fish, they come out of that river and they go into the ocean. But the Chinook are so important because they hang out there and they grow up for a bit and they acclimate between the freshwater and the saltwater. And so that's why Fir Island is looked at so much, is for this fishery. The thing is is that if all that south end of Fir Island starts becoming estuary, it should change our thoughts on where estuary needs to be for that fish. And where we were looking at possibly farmland up above, maybe we need to study that south end a little bit more.

And so I'm putting this out here, but this would be my recommendation for a Finding of Fact. "Estuary habitat studies in Skagit Bay should be prioritized. Monitoring what is and is not working is essential. Earth science should drive research, working with and not against Mother Nature."

So that's a lot to think about and if we're not ready to handle this tonight I'll respect that decision. But it goes back to the previous one of dealing with tension. And if we could try to start having that conversation. Maybe we could find some answers. But we would need it through not only biology but earth science, and see what that river is doing. And then you add in all the other things, you know. We just went through a big, high river. It doesn't happen every year. But is it going to – are we going to deal with that? And I think that's what we were talking about when we were dealing with resiliency is – you know, how are we going to live with our river?

Chair Raschko: Thank you. And that was your final?

Commissioner Hughes: That's my final.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Then I would suggest we go to the top. One part of me says we should try to make sure they're in the proper order, but that seems overwhelming.

(laughter)

Vice Chair Candler: We'd be here all night then!

Chair Raschko: (inaudible)

Ms. Rogers: Chair, would you like me to –

Chair Raschko: So let's read number 1.

Ms. Rogers: Chair, would you like me to read them out loud to you?

Commissioner Mitchell: She wants to read out loud for you.

Chair Raschko: Please.

Ms. Rogers: Okay, so number 1 is “Critical mass of farmland is required to support farm practices, including crop rotation and agricultural support businesses.”

Chair Raschko: Any thoughts?

Commissioner Henley: Sounds good.

Chair Raschko: I think that’s very good. Okay.

Ms. Rogers: “A pattern of steady loss of farmland has been documented due to development and other conversion.”

Chair Raschko: Anybody?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay, number 3.

Ms. Rogers: “The Board of County Commissioners found it absolutely necessary” – quote – ‘that any conversion of prime Skagit agricultural land be highly likely to deliver an increase in harvestable anadromous species while minimizing impacts to agriculture and farmland.’”

Chair Raschko: Any comments?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: All right, number 4, please.

Ms. Rogers: “This amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan by its vision statement” – quote – ‘to protect and conserve the agricultural resource lands and to continue to be viable today and into the future with a goal to ensure the stability and productivity of agriculture in Skagit County. Included in the Comprehensive Plan, there are guiding principles to protect agricultural land resources by minimizing the loss of the resource, by preserving agricultural lands for agriculture purposes, and by limiting new non-agricultural uses and activities on agriculture resource lands.’”

Chair Raschko: Okay. _____ number 5.

Ms. Rogers: Tammy, was there something that –

Vice Chair Candler: I kind of like what you said better than what’s written there. You said “agricultural *purposes*.” Can you change the first “uses” to “purposes,” as you read it? It’s the second to the last sentence right above “lands.”

Commissioner Mitchell: There you go – to the right. There you go.

Vice Chair Candler: Purposes. Thank you.

Commissioner Hutchison: And I should note also: Where you have the quotations, all of that verbiage is right out of the Comprehensive Plan, but I broke it up – like, here’s a piece, here’s a piece, here’s a piece. So it’s omitting parts from in between. I don’t know if you need –

Vice Chair Candler: The part that we changed wasn’t in quotes, right?

Commissioner Hutchison: No. And I don’t know if you want to keep those quotes then for that reason.

Commissioner Mitchell: It sounds good.

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you. But it is directly pulled from.

Chair Raschko: Number 5.

Ms. Rogers: “Skagit agricultural lands have a greater value than its dollar figure would indicate.”

Several Commissioners: Good.

Chair Raschko: All right, 6.

Ms. Rogers: “The amendment only presents large-scale habitat restoration projects done as offsite compensatory mitigation for environmental impacts occurring on non-Ag-NRL lands.”

Chair Raschko: Everybody okay?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Rogers: “Large-scale programmatic habitat enhancement often envisions the conversion of farmland, adding to further loss of farmland.”

Chair Raschko: Anybody have a problem with that one?

Commissioner Henley: That looks good.

Chair Raschko: All right.

Ms. Rogers: “The Growth Management Act encourages the conservation of productive agricultural lands and discourages incompatible uses.”

Commissioner Henley: Also good.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Rogers: If I might suggest, I think you could combine 8 and 9 into, say, “The Growth Management Act and the Countywide Planning Policies.”

Vice Chair Candler: What do you think? You okay with that?

Chair Raschko: I'm okay with that. Good catch. Okay, number 9 again.

Ms. Rogers: "A permanent amendment is needed to advance the County's obligation to protect Ag-NRL lands from inappropriate conversion to non-agricultural uses."

Chair Raschko: Okay?

Commissioner Henley: That's good.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Rogers: "Farmland can be targeted for easy acquisition for mitigation by large outside entities, creating undesirable opportunities that lead to conversion of farmland for distant and offsite environmental impacts unrelated to farming."

Chair Raschko: We all like that.

Vice Chair Candler: I like it and I know you didn't want to spend a lot of time moving things around, but don't you think that 10 goes before 9?

Ms. Rogers: Okay, number 11. "Skagit County's principal concern in this issue arises from the desire to end 30-plus years of conflict over fish and farms, which appears closely connected to offsite mitigation spending and the financial dependency it has created."

Vice Chair Candler: Okay, I have a question about this one.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead. I do too.

Vice Chair Candler: Amy, I think this was yours. Is that right – Commissioner Hughes?

Commissioner Hughes: Yeah, and I got it from the staff report.

Vice Chair Candler: Okay. I did not hear that from the staff verbal report. What I heard was that this issue – first of all, I don't know how this will definitely end 30-plus years of conflict over fish and crops. I don't think it's going to do that. Secondly, this seems to be more of a conflict with, for lack of a better word, industry and farms, and fish are almost incidental. So I don't know. You guys can decide and I don't have a strong opinion, but I don't think that's what I heard them saying.

Commissioner Hutchison: I did hear the community saying that we need to be protecting the fish and the farms, so –

Vice Chair Candler: But is it ending 30 years of conflict? It seems to me it's working within a conflict that's going to be ongoing forever.

Commissioner Hutchison: Fair play.

Commissioner Hughes: I think we should let staff help us because it was in their staff report.

Ms. Rogers: And I'm going to call a lifeline. Will is on Zoom.

(much laughter)

Ms. Rogers: Just give us a moment so we can – if Brian could switchover to Zoom, Will should be online, but I think he would have a better statement on that.

Commissioner Rose: The word “tension” could be substituted for “conflict.”

Vice Chair Candler: The word what? It’s not that – for me, it’s the word “end.” And it’s also not so much the conflict of just the fish and the farms. It’s –

Commissioner Mitchell: Maybe “to work to solve” or – I don’t know. Something like that.

Vice Chair Candler: There he is.

Commissioner Henley: Who is that?

(laughter)

Ms. Rogers: Well, we can hear you, so go ahead.

(A lot of technical problems occur throughout the following Zoom call.)

Will Honea: Okay. Well, I’m glad to be a lifeline this evening __ Commissioners! _____. I think Commissioner Candler – I have to agree with Commissioner Candler. You know, I participated in helping with that staff report, and I think that’s, you know, not an inaccurate statement to say that it’s not necessarily about fish and farms. I think it’s really more in a bigger picture in alignment with what Commissioner Browning said. This is our natural resources land base and we have every right to say that we don’t have room on this land base to absorb environmental harms, you know, created by a full breadth of industrial civilization elsewhere. And that’s what it says. So I think it really _____. There will always be a certain tension between fish and farms simply _____ principally habitat restoration. You know, they’re not making any more land. It’s a finite thing. So I think you’re quite correct, Commissioner Candler. It’s not going to necessarily end but I think it’s going to substantially ameliorate the pressure to convert farmland, you know, into habitat. It’s not warranted by this sort of species recovery. You know, the species recovery is tied to these specific projects that we’ve worked through with resource agencies, and if this energy _____, it’s a problem. So, you know, there will always be a tension but I don’t think we’re going to end conflict.

That’s a long-winded _____ come up with a program.

Vice Chair Candler: Thank you.

Commissioner Hughes: And I’m happy for editing if you’re seeing the wisdom of that.

Commissioner Mitchell: He did say –

Several Commissioners: – “ameliorate the tension.”

Commissioner Mitchell: That sounded better.

Vice Chair Candler: Yeah, “ameliorate tensions” as opposed to “end conflict.” Sounds good. And then the other thing was maybe we can add “industry” in the mix between fish and farms, at least even if we don’t take fish out? Maybe that makes more sense?

Chair Raschko: Could you please restore it to the screen?

Ms. Rogers: Yes. Brian? Or – so, Will, we’ll go back over to the screen to edit the recorded motion so we won’t be able to hear you.

Unidentified Commissioner: Oh.

Commissioner Mitchell: There goes our lifeline.

Ms. Rogers: You just got one statement. That’s it!

Vice Chair Candler: Is this going to address your issue or do you have something different about this one?

Chair Raschko: I don’t see why we even have it in there.

Commissioner Mitchell: Ah, you’ve already got it in there. Okay. Number 11’s where we are.

Ms. Rogers: Right here. Oh, I don’t quite have it. I just added “ameliorate tensions.”

Vice Chair Candler: And then we want to add “30 years plus of conflict over fish, farms, and industry.”

Commissioner Mitchell: “Fish, farms, and industry.” That’s good.

Ms. Rogers: “...tensions resulting from fish, farms...”

Commissioner Mitchell: Can you read the whole thing, start to finish, please?

Ms. Rogers: “Skagit County’s principal concern in this issue arises from the desire to ameliorate tensions resulting from 30-plus years of conflict over fish, farms, and industry, which appears closely related to offsite mitigation spending and the financial dependency it has created.”

Commissioner Rose: “Closely related” or “closely connected”?

Ms. Rogers: Oh – “closely connected.”

Chair Raschko: It seems to me we’re bringing into a – a whole new element into this. It hasn’t even been in the discussion, has it?

Commissioner Mitchell: It was in the presentation, so...

Chair Raschko: Pardon me?

Commissioner Mitchell: It was in the presentation, so – wasn’t it?

Commissioner Rose: Yes, it was.

Vice Chair Candler: I think the only question is whether it's a reason why we're –

Chair Raschko: – why we're doing this.

Vice Chair Candler: – why we're doing it. If it's a reason or a finding.

Chair Raschko: And the fact was in the document here somewhere.

Commissioner Mitchell: You can poll the group, too. You can do a straw poll.

Chair Raschko: I was just finishing my thoughts. Okay, let's – okay, any more discussion of whether _____? Pardon me? Am I the only one who thinks it's –

Vice Chair Candler: I could take it or leave it. I don't know that it's really a reason why _____.

Commissioner Henley: I don't think it makes much difference whether we leave it in or take it out. I mean, if it's easier to take it out, let's take it out.

Vice Chair Candler: I feel like the verbiage is maybe more like the County's introduction to *why* this is in front of us. But _____.

Commissioner Henley: Well, this sounds to me like a controversy magnet.

Chair Raschko: That's the way I feel.

Commissioner Henley: And I think it would be better to avoid that by simply leaving it out.

Chair Raschko: See, my understanding was the reason for doing this is because, as everything else says, Skagit farmland is in limited supply and by having the outside mitigation thing eating it up it's going to harm agriculture and everything else. And all of a sudden this says, Hey, the principal concern was to lessen tensions over – I mean, that's the first time I've heard that.

Vice Chair Candler: – to be accurate. Right. Yeah, I'm with you.

Commissioner Henley: I suggest we delete 11.

Chair Raschko: Has anybody else have any objections to that?

Commissioner Rose: Nope.

Commissioner Hutchison: I agree.

Commissioner Rose: Lose it.

Ms. Rogers: Okay. "Non-productive projects need to be reviewed, and efforts to correct inefficient results need to be prioritized. Adaptive management practices need to be used and a 30-year review period could be considered for this."

Chair Raschko: Anybody have any feelings on this one?

Commissioner Henley: It's okay.

Chair Raschko: All right, let's go to 12.

Ms. Rogers: "Estuary habitat studies should be prioritized. Monitoring what is and is not working is essential. Earth science should drive research, working with and not against Mother Nature."

Vice Chair Candler: Can I say something?

Chair Raschko: (unintelligible)

Vice Chair Candler: My only issue with this is I know that people could have – I feel like people could use this exact thing to argue in a manner that would be not helpful to farmlands.

Commissioner Mitchell: To undermine?

Vice Chair Candler: Yes.

Commissioner Mitchell: Okay.

Vice Chair Candler: That's my concern. Because if you study estuary habitats and the whole point is that people are suggesting that they create – recreate the estuary as if you could, you know, do that. I don't think that – I don't know how it will cut because I'm not a scientist, but I just –

Commissioner Henley: What if you just dropped off that last phrase and stopped it with the word "research"?

Vice Chair Candler: Well, the problem is we don't want them – we don't – to me it seems like maybe we don't care about the research; we want to protect the farmland. I mean (laughter), I'm not saying – that was flippant. But I'm saying we're not balancing estuary science with protecting the farmland in this particular ordinance. We're just protecting the farmland – in the way that we're saying you can't use it for a cheap way to offsite mitigate. You know what I mean? So we're not really –

Chair Raschko: We're not talking about how to mitigate or what to mitigate –

Vice Chair Candler: Exactly.

Chair Raschko: – or anything else. All we're talking about (is) whether we *should* mitigate it at all.

Vice Chair Candler: Exactly.

Chair Raschko: In this place.

Vice Chair Candler: We're just saying you can't do it offsite.

Commissioner Mitchell: So what you're saying is that – well, we all know this is going to happen anyway.

Vice Chair Candler: Yes.

Commissioner Mitchell: Correct?

Vice Chair Candler: That's true, and it should.

Commissioner Mitchell: It should and it will be and it's continued for a whole lot of different reasons.

Vice Chair Candler: But I don't know that it's a reason why we would do *this*.

Commissioner Mitchell: Okay.

Commissioner Hutchison: Well, number 11 is speaking that other active projects as well. This isn't referring to either – this is talking about no more –

Vice Chair Candler: And there's nothing wrong – so it's all just for discussion – there's nothing wrong with us telling the Commissioners what we think should happen, even if it's not – you know. And so in that sense I think it's fine. I don't have a strong opinion about this at all. It's just that strictly speaking I think estuary science might not be the reason we would do *this*, quite specifically. Does that make sense?

(affirmative sounds)

Commissioner Henley: I think we should leave it out.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Are we going to vote on this, or what?

Commissioner Hutchison: So should we just say, "In future," comma? Like, just as a recommendation as in addition to all that we've already proposed.

Commissioner Rose: I think we should lose number 12.

Chair Raschko: The point you made was that we're trying to put the reasons down why we want to preserve farmland and do this. So how science is done on the places where it is allowed really isn't our venue.

Vice Chair Candler: Well, it wouldn't cut in favor of *not* allowing regeneration of estuary, I don't think.

(several Commissioners talking at the same time)

Commissioner Rose: You're making sense. I think that it's opening the door for a big, fat argument.

Commissioner Mitchell: I think a number of you guys are right for the same kind of reasons ultimately, and I think we should remove 12.

Chair Raschko: Quite frankly, I think they're very good in and of themselves, but I agree that it complicates things here. Any other thoughts or feelings? We need a consensus on this so we can get through it.

Commissioner Henley: Let's lose 12.

Chair Raschko: Okay. You're in favor of deletion?

Unidentified Commissioner: Mm-hmm.

Chair Raschko: All right, so 12's out.

Commissioner Mitchell: This is why we have these discussions!

Chair Raschko: Does 11 not fit the same ___?

Vice Chair Candler: The only thing I like about that is that in the discussion we had _____.

Commissioner Henley: (unintelligible)

Ms. Rogers: Chair Raschko? We will need to vote on the recorded motion itself.

Chair Raschko: Oh, we do need a vote on the – okay, let's get through this. Is it all right the way it is?

Commissioner Mitchell: Wait. She was still _____ her thought.

Chair Raschko: Pardon me?

Commissioner Mitchell: Tammy was –

Vice Chair Candler: I don't have an objection. I just – I think it was tied a little bit to the discussion in terms of whether or not these offsite mitigation projects would be –

Commissioner Rose: – maintained properly.

Vice Chair Candler: – maintained properly and whether they would really do anything to help the fish. And so, I mean, I think it's pretty related to the discussion but I don't know. I don't have a strong opinion.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Well, it's a little off-topic, and the topic, once again, it's protecting the farmland. And this is talking about projects should be reviewed for productivity, and that's two different subjects. The subject at hand is protect the farmland. That is _____ but we're saying you can't do any, so there's nothing to review, right?

(several Commissioners speaking at the same time)

Chair Raschko: Okay. Please? Vince needs to leave and we need to get a vote, so can we get number 11? Yes or no on 11?

Commissioner Rose: I say lose it.

Commissioner Woodmansee: I would lose it.

Commissioner Mitchell: Take it out.

Unidentified Commissioner: Take it out's fine by me.

Chair Raschko: All right. That completes the review of the _____. So we need to vote on approval of the recorded motion. All those in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: All opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Abstentions?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So that passes unanimously. Thank you very much, everybody. And that concludes_____.

Okay, that brings us to our Director's Update. Mr. Hart?

Hal Hart: Yep. All right. Due to the lateness of the hour, I'll summarize.

We're leading an effort right now on resiliency in the Planning Department, working with FEMA, looking at flood issues. And they're asking the question: Can you overlay the data? Can you overlay the flood data with human population data to make a more resilient response in the future to flood or fire or other things? So we're looking at those populations that repeatedly get flooded and the idea is to come up with a tool that will help us in the next flood. So just as an FYI. That's – essentially that one idea is gaining traction of using our GIS – Geographic Information System – mapping that way. So we'll see where it goes over the next three or four weeks.

So this shows – this is basically the same thing, although as we plan for floods or our response to floods we really need to think further ahead and so we're bringing in capital facilities ideas of Hey, maybe we don't want people living up in a future subdivision that is created with only one escape route. And so looking at that over time might be a good thing. And that was the deal with fire upriver. So that is coming up but at this point it's just really, really early and that may not come out of it.

Here's where we are this year. Just a quick note: 146 homes off to the right there, the lightest blue, so we're tracking above last year and we're tracking above two years ago as well. So we're doing fine that way. We do need to get focused on getting the permits out the door right now. We're trying to do that. We've recently lost some staff so we are focused on trying to serve the community to get their permits out the door.

Notes from the Field from last week: This is the Brewing Company growing rapidly. They've got skin on the bones. That was last Friday. So they're moving very fast out there. And this is just – you can't see it very well even in this blown-up picture but there are tiny little people sitting or working on the roof of that airport hangar. And so the scale of those hangars is very large. Also going, Lindell Yachts is going. And then two weeks ago when we met I said, Hey, there's this corner where it says "Future Home of." Well, we just had a meeting – staff had a meeting out there on Friday and – Public Works staff and the Planning staff – and they're going to go ahead

and build kiddie-corner – well, it's about where Amazon is, the road that you go back to Amazon. There's an empty lot there next to Chad Fisher Construction. That looks to be that it'll be a 30,000-square foot warehouse. So there's more stuff to come. And that's it.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Any questions for Mr. Hart?

Commissioner Knutzen: I do have a question about – no, no, you don't have to go up – regarding that. It's usually every meeting you give projects like this – all the buildings – reports of what's going on. I was talking to a fellow last night when I drove to eastern Washington. Janicki Industries, where they're at between Lyman and Hamilton, Chad Fisher Construction started a big project there a few months ago. I was talking to the guy that does the dirt work last night. He told me it's what they're calling "Building number 10." There's another building on the drawing board and where they're at now is 180,000 square feet. That's four acres. I don't remember – of course, it's no doubt been permitted. I'm sure this is all familiar to you. Maybe?

Mr. Hart: Well, if it's in the City of Hamilton then I wouldn't have seen it, or if it's in the City of Lyman then I wouldn't have seen it. So is it Hamilton or Lyman?

Commissioner Knutzen: Well, it's right across – it's the Georgia Pacific property, so Lyman and then Hamilton. Dyne's Poultry has a chicken mill up there.

Mr. Hart: Yeah, that's Hamilton. Yeah.

Commissioner Knutzen: And it's just north of that and east of that. And then there was a bridge that goes over the road. And as I remember it, that was Georgia Pacific.

Mr. Hart: Yeah. That's correct.

Commissioner Knutzen: And then Janicki is now expanding east. Hamilton, there's a new fuel station there. Is that Pumpkin Center? That fire hall? Is that there? I mean, there's a fire hall right across the road of this.

Mr. Hart: Yeah, that's been planned for several years now, at least four or five years, where they were going to do the fueling center. This newest building I just only heard about in the last few days.

Commissioner Knutzen: What now?

Mr. Hart: I've only heard about the new building in the last few days.

Commissioner Knutzen: Oh, okay. Well, that's Skagit County.

Mr. Hart: It's in the City of Hamilton.

Commissioner Knutzen: It *is* in the City of Hamilton?

Mr. Hart: Yes.

Commissioner Knutzen: I didn't really know there was a City of Hamilton, but I guess there must be! Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Any other questions?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, thank you. We'll turn now to Commissioner Comments, so do you have anything else, Mark?

Commissioner Knutzen: I'm done.

Chair Raschko: You done? Joe?

Commissioner Woodmansee: No, I'm good.

Commissioner Rose: I don't have anything.

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you – nothing.

Vice Chair Candler: I just want to say that I am not here at the next meeting. So I'll watch the video or whatever but I can't be here.

Chair Raschko: Anything, Kathy?

Commissioner Mitchell: Nothing, thank you.

Chair Raschko: Amy?

Commissioner Hughes: I will end this with: The seasons have changed.

Commissioner Rose: The what?

Commissioner Hughes: The seasons. It's changing. It's not summer. And the snow geese are coming in.

Chair Raschko: Oh, great.

(laughter)

Commissioner Hughes: I just thought: The snow geese are coming in!

Vice Chair Candler: It means ice cream, right?

Commissioner Hughes: The snow geese are coming in. I don't know if up in your area you're getting them but snow geese!

Commissioner Knutzen: You sound *happy* about that.

(laughter)

Commissioner Knutzen: Is your husband happy about that?

Commissioner Hughes: Yeah, by March 15th it's, like, they need to go back. But, you know, it's always kind of – they're *back*!

Commissioner Knutzen: Well, they like eating wheat fields. I know that.

Commissioner Hughes: Well, yeah.

Commissioner Knutzen: Your husband doesn't like that, I know that.

Commissioner Hughes: You know, we deal with things.

Commissioner Mitchell: Fertilizer.

Chair Raschko: Well, that's wonderful. Okay.

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: Thank you. I've got nothing to add so I just thank everybody for being here, and have a good evening, and our meeting is adjourned (gavel).