

**Skagit County Planning Commission  
Work Session: Agritourism  
November 24, 2020**

**Planning**

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

**Staff:**                   **Hal Hart, Planning Director**  
                                  **Mike Cerbone, Assistant Planning Director**  
                                  **Peter Gill, Long Range Planning Manager**

**Others:**               **Lisa Grueter, Consultant (BERK Consulting, Inc.)**

Chair Tim Raschko: The November 24, 2020, meeting of the Skagit County Planning Commission is hereby in session. We'll start out with a roll call. We'll start with Commissioner Knutzen.

Commissioner Mark Knutzen: Present.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Shea?

Commissioner Joseph Shea: Here.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Woodmansee?

Commissioner Joe Woodmansee: Here.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Rose?

Commissioner Martha Rose: Here.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Lundsten?

Commissioner Mark Lundsten: Here.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Hughes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: I think she's here. Can't speak. Commissioner Candler?

Commissioner Tammy Candler: Here.

Chair Raschko: And Commissioner Mitchell is absent and I'm present.

Okay. To start off, I'd like to offer my condolences to Commissioner Mitchell. She recently lost a family member and that's why she is not able to attend tonight. So I think our hearts go out to her and our good wishes.

With that, we'll move on to Approval of Minutes. Has – is there any discussion of the minutes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Is there a move to approve the minutes?

Commissioner Rose: So moved.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Second it.

Chair Raschko: Okay, it's moved and seconded to approve the minutes. All in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: That doesn't work very well. Okay, Knutzen?

Commissioner Knutzen: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Shea?

Commissioner Shea: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Woodmansee.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Rose.

Commissioner Rose: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Lundsten.

Commissioner Lundsten: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Hughes.

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Hughes is an "aye" probably. Candler?

Commissioner Candler: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Aye, and I vote "aye." Okay.

So Mr. Gill, have you knowledge of any people's desires to make public remarks to the Commission?

Mr. Peter Gill: I have not received any requests from the public for public remarks tonight.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. And I don't believe we have any callers currently on. Is that correct?

Mr. Gill: There are a couple guests.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Gill: Yes, there are a couple.

Chair Raschko: If any of those guests wish to speak, you may indicate to do so by hitting the "raise hand" button. No. All right. With that then, we'll move on to our main item tonight on our agenda. It's Agritourism, a Work Session. BERK Consulting Incorporated will present an overview to the Skagit County Agritourism Project. Public outreach work will begin in 2021 with policy and potential legislation to come in the spring and summer. The draft Public Outreach and Engagement Plan has been distributed with the meeting materials. Hopefully everybody's had a chance to take a look at those. So Mr. Gill, would you please introduce this session?

Mr. Gill: Yes. Thank you very much. I'm going to go ahead and share my screen. We have a presentation to go through tonight. It shouldn't take all night if I can figure out how to find my screen. All right. So you should be seeing my slides. Is that correct? Everybody see them?

(sounds of assent from Planning Commissioners)

Mr. Gill: Excellent, excellent. So thank you for the introduction. I would also like to introduce Lisa Grueter. She is here with us from BERK Consulting, and we are very lucky to have her. She has done an extensive amount of work in the Puget Sound on lots of GMA-related projects and shoreline projects. She also brings a great team of economists and outreach educators, data scientists, things like that to the project, so I am very happy to have her. And she is here tonight to talk to us more about agritourism.

I'm just going to launch us a little bit here into the project. I'm going to talk about, What is agritourism? Pretty simple – it's kind of the crossroads or the interface between agriculture and tourism. It's basically attracting members of the public to visit agricultural operations. So there's many components for the producer. There's income, obviously. Right? So with that, value-added products that can be directly marketed to the public – provides direct revenue. You start talking about vertical integration of different factors and all the economic type stuff that I don't know too much about. But that's kind of on the agriculture/producer/farmer side.

For the public it provides entertainment, recreation, and education – very important for people to understand, you know, where their food comes from. It doesn't come from a grocery store. And importantly, it's a rural activity and we want to make sure that we stay rural here in Skagit County.

So that is kind of on a big scale what is agritourism.

A little bit of background. You all are – at least some of you from the Planning Commission were here back in 2017 when this issue first came out and came up, when a local farm in Bow asked or put in a petition to allow restaurants in the ag zone. The Planning Commission at that time in

2018 recommended that it get tabled and receive more input from the public and that we do some analysis and exploration of the idea. And the Board concurred with that and they added it as a high priority work product for our department work plan. And so that is why we're here today, and, you know, I have this map here of at least 25 different agricultural tourist stops within Skagit County. It's been a long history of tourism in Skagit County from the, you know, the Tulip Festival to the Festival of Family Farms. It's been going on a while. So this is just kind of revisiting some of those things and figuring out what's right for Skagit County.

Here's our – kind of a big picture process, right? So how we plan on moving forward with this. So right now we're in the discovery phase, right? So we've just brought BERK on. Now we need to dig in a little bit and look at kind of some of the economics behind agritourism. What are existing policies? We already allow quite a few things in the ag zones and in the rural areas and so we need to kind of flesh all that out and make sure we know what we're already doing, and then pull together some case studies from around the area and some from a little further to see what other communities have done in this realm. And so Lisa's going to talk more about the specifics of that. And you all did receive a draft Education and Outreach Plan last week when I sent the agenda, and so hopefully you've had a chance to look at that and we'll take any feedback you have on that tonight and in the days and weeks going forward.

So that's the discovery phase – doing some outreach, education, touching base. And then the next phase is looking at policies and what would be the objective of an agritourism policy in Skagit County. What are the benefits? But also, What are the drawbacks, especially on large producers, and some of the potential problems? And where do we get into conflict with our Comp Plan goals and policies?

And so that is in the spring and leads up into the summer and so by the summer we hope to actually have some legislative proposals in front of you, or potentially we would have a legislative proposal in front of you that would look at: Do we need to change any codes? Do we need to change any Comprehensive Plan policies? Things like that.

And so that then takes us all the way to 2022. So hopefully this summer we can start talking specifics about that, but we would like to keep you all engaged as much as you would like to be all the way through and up to the proposal process.

So with that, I will pass the baton on to Lisa so she can get into some of the details here on how they think we're going to move forward.

Lisa Grueter: Thanks, Peter. Thank you, Commissioners. So we're going to go into a little bit more detailed schedule, what we're headed to do in the situation assessment to inform the code and policy process. And then, as Peter mentioned, there's a qualitative outreach side as well. That was the subject of the paper given to you ahead of your meeting. And then discussion, and you'll see I've put some questions in for the Commission along the way in this presentation so we'll take your questions on the way.

So our purpose is to look at the impacts of agritourism in the county, and to do that we're working on identifying stakeholders and then figuring out the best methods for public engagement. And as Peter mentioned, it's to create a common understanding of agritourism, not only what you do today but what you *could* do, and what that means to producers and neighbors of producers. We're also working on a situation assessment, and I'll share more as we go along, but the idea is to address agritourism forums; what that means to agriculture viability; what it means to community quality of life; and once adopted, how would the county enforce whatever balancing

of activities allowed with quality of life. And then Peter mentioned we'll work on proposed amendments.

So the next slide, I think, gets into a little bit more detail on the schedule. So we're here in mid-November. We started a kickoff in mid-October with staff to start to gather data and to identify an engagement process. And that led to the document we shared with you for this meeting.

We are also working on a situation assessment as of late October into early January. While we're doing the quantitative side, we also plan to do some initial interviews with stakeholders and go to standing bodies like the Planning Commission and the Ag Advisory Board as we're collecting information about agriculture in Skagit County. Once we kind of get the lay of the land, then we'll share that study and we'll start to develop some options for policies or code and we'll bring that back to the Planning Commission and other bodies. And then once we kind of narrow in on some approaches that seem more favorable to the County's overall goals, then we'll work to kind of refine it into a proposal. So that's by next fall, so basically a year from now.

So in the information side, the situation assessment, this is a high level version of our outline. And so the study is meant to, again, look at agriculture in the county today and ag tourism, and how is it affecting the local economy; what's allowed now and what's not allowed; and what activities are already happening. And then highlighting some trends in agriculture and agritourism employment; and then case studies, and that's one of the things we're going to talk to you about tonight in terms of which ones we might dive into. Our thought on case studies is just it's another way of looking at what other communities have experienced and compare and contrast that with Skagit County to kind of help inform beyond the data.

This map is sharing inventory of cropland that the State Department of Ag puts together every year. This is 2019. And so it's just giving us a snapshot of what's been inventoried. It's not a full and complete inventory but it's pretty good. It's geographically specific. One of the things we want to do in both our analysis and in the engagement is to figure out how to get a good diverse representation in the types of producers and products and the geography of the county.

So this is another way of looking at that same data. So the table in yellow matches sort of the inventory that was in yellow on the previous map. So the State is identifying about 84,000 acres of cropland. And it is not usually fully complete in terms of some of the categories, like it doesn't – since its focus is on cropland it doesn't always capture rangeland. And its inventory is always being improved and so there may be something out there that's been there a long time but they haven't got it yet, and that's usually pastureland that gets undercounted. And that may explain the difference between what we see on the map from the State Department of Ag and the Census of Agriculture, which has a higher acre count. So as of 2017 the Census of Agriculture had about 97,000 – almost 98,000 – acres, whereas the State inventory is about 84,000. We like to look at it, though, because it is spatial data and we can map it more easily than Census of Agriculture.

I guess the other thing to note on this table is that it's showing relative to each other what's sort of the highest acre count. So hay, vegetable, cereal grain like wheat, pasture, and then the State also tracks shellfish as well.

We're also checking into other sources of data so we will check out state sources, Employment Security Department, but this graph is based – and the Census of Agriculture, but we have been tracking some information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that just shows in terms of the value of the commodity, so this is different than acres. It's the value of what's produced relative to each commodity type, so vegetable and vegetable seed there in the dark blue; nursery and

greenhouse in the teal; dairy in red; livestock in yellow; field crops in green, and so on. So we'll be tracking that information and comparing it to other sources of information as well. And my colleagues – as Peter mentioned, I have colleagues who are data scientists and economists and they are producing the evaluation in terms of the economic impact, and they will be presenting to you when the study is ready.

This is the Census of Agriculture and the questions on direct sales that operators may have. And so from 2007 to 2017 you'll see an increase in the total value. You'll see sort of variable numbers of operators of reporting direct sales, but the average per-operator has gone up. I know the Census of Agriculture is not perfect. It's a sample. And so we'll look at the error rates and things like that to see how well the information holds up. But in general there's an increase in direct sales, which is a form of agritourism.

One of the things we want to do with the case studies is look at how different counties or regions define agritourism. What are their policies and what's the economic impact? This graph here was just a quick snapshot of some Census of Agriculture data we were looking at for nearby counties in Washington state on the west side. So it is showing, especially for Snohomish County and a little bit for Pierce and Thurston, an increase in income related to – there's newer questions they're asking around agritourism and recreational services – the receipts. So this just one aspect of thinking about what might make an interesting case study to take a look at.

So far, based on sort of the initial look at nearby counties in western Washington and then talking with staff at our kickoff – and areas of the country that the Commission or Board of County Commissioners has mentioned in the past, that's the list on the left-hand side starting with the two counties on either side of Skagit and then some other places that have been exploring agritourism recently, even though they're different for sure. Sammamish River Valley has just been a source of interest for King County and producers and neighbors around wineries. Thurston has a program in place for agritourism, and then Savie Island in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. They're both in Oregon. And then some other states have some statewide policies that translate into local regulations around agritourism. So that was the starting list. We were thinking of looking at criteria like which ones are similar to Skagit in terms of their proximity to major population centers; which ones have the sort of strength and diversity in ag productivity; which ones might represent some different approaches. So far our initial sort of short list is Whatcom, Snohomish, and then counties in Oregon – our thought of going outside the state but kind of being nearby is just to contrast and yet choose an area that people may have some familiarity with. And then our thought on Whatcom as a county with a pretty going concern in terms of agriculture with about 100,000 acres or more in ag, and a pretty diverse set of producers similar to Skagit. Snohomish, even though it is maybe not the same as Skagit and Whatcom in terms of the strength of the agriculture, it is showing a pretty big increase in agritourism and lies next to you and it might be a contrast. You know, you can kind of look at their trend.

But we're open to discussion and we aren't going to kick anything off the list completely in terms of we will still kind of look to these as places to look at definitions or some trends, so I think our question for the Planning Commission is: Is there something not on the list that should be on the list under consideration, and do you have any input on our sort of initial short list?

Chair Raschko: Can anybody think of any suggestions?

Commissioner Candler: I do. Oh, I've got to figure out how to raise my hand. Here it is.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead, Commissioner Candler.

Commissioner Candler: I was just – I have a question about that. Why – maybe there's a reason; I don't know – why are there no eastern Washington counties on there? Coming to mind is like, maybe like Chelan, where they have all the vineyards – quite a bit of tourism around that that I have heard about here and there. So I was just wondering why we're not looking at Chelan or Walla Walla, someplace like that.

Ms. Grueter: Certainly Chelan, I think, could be a good one. Walla Walla is maybe not – I mean, it certainly has a lot of tourism. It maybe doesn't have the same range of diverse products, I think. So those were some of the things we were thinking about. But I think Chelan's a good – and actually we're open to anything that you're interested in so either of them could be on the list. We were trying to stay sort of west of the mountains just generally for comparison, but I think you make good points.

Commissioner Candler: But can I ask why? Is there a reason why it makes more sense to compare only western counties? I mean, maybe it does. I haven't really thought about it.

Ms. Grueter: We were kind of looking at counties that were pretty close to bigger population centers so that sort of left us on the west side, and I guess on the I-5 corridor generally at least in the counties within Washington. But, you know, that doesn't mean we can't look east. I think you have good points there.

Chair Raschko: Any other Commissioners have any?

Commissioner Rose: I had my hand raised, Tim. This is Commissioner Rose.

Chair Raschko: I see that now. Go ahead, Commissioner Rose, please.

Commissioner Rose: So my question is: Was your question related to location or types of agritourism when you were asking for ideas?

Ms. Grueter: Yeah, we're trying to get a sense of, What is the effect of agritourism on the local economy and what does it mean to agricultural viability? And we thought by focusing in on a few examples it might inspire some thought here for Skagit in one direction or another. So that was just generally our approach as to why we were having case studies, and then so far our criteria were just really trying to get counties close to major population centers. That was really our – and similar in the diversity. So before we kind of spend time we thought we – you know, since you're living it day-to-day and what Skagit County is like, we thought before we kind of dive in more we'd ask your opinions.

Commissioner Rose: I see. Well, a number of years ago I read articles about up in Whatcom County a lot of the dairy farmers were only able to be viable because of agritourism because they incorporated agritourism into their dairy farms in a variety of ways that allowed them to stay in business instead of selling off the family farm. So at any rate, that's how I'm going to – I think this is an important conversation.

Ms. Grueter: Thank you.

Commissioner Rose: The only example I have of Skagit County is – well, and I'm not even sure I should bring it up, but I know of a place that has barn dances that are off the record. But I think that that should be part of what's looked at as well.

Ms. Grueter: Okay. And I think, Peter, you were going to look at sort of the major event type activity as well as the sort of ongoing sales type activity.

Mr. Gill: Yep, and the events within the agricultural areas is definitely something that's in the conversation, and what's currently allowed versus what people are really asking for, and – you know, just come right out with it: People are really interested in wedding venues. And so there's lots of drawbacks for that but there's lots of interest in that. And one of the things is, you know, it's hard to make it an accessory to ag, you know. It's, you know, the visual veritable barn style thing you could try to make a case and say that's ag-related, but.... Anyway, events are definitely something that – it's a hot button item so we need to keep conversation going on that one.

Chair Raschko: Okay, anybody else, questions or comments?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Gill: We do have a few more slides so if we want to keep going on the slides or –

Ms. Grueter: We can. Peter, it looks like he had his hand up?

Mr. Gill: Joseph does.

Chair Raschko: Who does?

Mr. Gill: Commissioner Shea.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Shea, go ahead, please.

Commissioner Shea: Yeah, I just want to say so at our farm we've used, like, the Skagit Farm Map and everything like that for our farm and we don't produce all year long and there's a lot of people like that that only are operating certain crops in certain fields so they don't have revenue coming in year-round, just in case there's a bad year or something or what-have-you. But I think having agritourism for farms and just in the county in general is actually really important for a lot of people to get steady income. Get some tourism benefits, but then they also benefit everyone just like Tulip Town or Tulip Festival or what-have-you. The people coming into the town to experience that put money into the city and help us all out, so I think it's really important.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you. Okay, would you like to continue then?

Commissioner Candler: I just – I have one thought.

Chair Raschko: Who is this?

Commissioner Candler: This is Commissioner Candler. Sorry, I just – I remembered quite a bit of stuff around the lavender festivals – Commissioner Shea's comment made me think of that – out at Sequim in that area. I don't know if that's the kind of comparability that would be helpful, but that's another idea.



Ms. Grueter: Sure. I think they have a smaller ag base but certainly that is a \_\_\_ out there. These are all helpful because even if we don't take a deep dive into all of them just having a good list for us to kind of source for, you know, definitions or particular activities that they do I think is helpful.

Chair Raschko: I'm sorry. Ms. Candler, do you still have your hand up? Do you wish to speak again?

Commissioner Candler: No, I lowered it finally.

Chair Raschko: Okay! Thank you.

Ms. Grueter: Great. Thank you. So the other part we wanted to share with you and that was part of your packet was the outreach and engagement side. So in the plan we lay out some objectives. And I won't read them all but basically it's meant to have an inclusive process, reaching out to different communities and producers, providing both information and activities for stakeholders to get involved and to share their insights. And then the document \_\_\_ and make sure that's transmitted to you as we kind of build some options and policies.

And then I think we wanted to share with you a preliminary list of stakeholders. We have broad categories here. So producers for sure, and rural residents. We were thinking of the issue of quality of life in being nearby to an event. It would be interesting to hear from folks. And then trades: \_\_\_ groups, chambers of commerce, any interested property owners, community organizations. And then we are starting to contact ag agencies – WAZ Extension, the Conservation District, and State Department of Ag – keeping in mind local governments. Sometimes we've seen in similar studies to this that some cities are concerned about how much activity goes out into the rural areas that could take energy from their downtowns or other service providers. And then, of course, legislative bodies and appointed bodies.

So one question we have for you is, Are we missing any categories, and do you have some advice for us on getting in touch with producers in different geographic location or commodity groups, and also, and what residential or producer populations do we need to be aware of?

Chair Raschko: Any suggestions?

(silence)

Ms. Grueter: We are asking these same questions of some stakeholders, so we're getting some specific ideas, so I think, Peter, it was suggested to us to kind of look west and east of I-5 and then on the west side of I-5 look north and south of SR-20 was one way of thinking about the geographic location of different producers.

Mr. Gill: Yeah, and I would add that we are reaching out with the Ag Advisory Board and we'll be going back to them in December or January to kind of get more feedback and do a more detailed kind of presentation. Something similar to this to try to see how we can \_\_\_ with the different types of agricultural groups that are out there and see what we're missing and make sure we don't miss something. We know there's already a number of forums or committees that have been set up in the past to talk about tourism specifically related to rural kind of things including agriculture, so we're going to try and take advantage of what's been done before as well. But we really are trying to do a broad, broad reach in the beginning because we would really like the feedback now instead of when we have legislative code in front of you so that we can try to, you know, make everyone

a little bit whole on all of this and we don't overstep and turn the whole idea sour somehow. So we really want to make a big reach on this.

Chair Raschko: Anybody else?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Grueter: So one of the things that we noted is in the attachment to your packet. It's some demographic information about the county on population, race, and languages spoken at home. And our thought was that some of the engagement, especially to the broader community, could be both in English and in Spanish. This map is just showing by census district the share of folks identifying as Hispanic.

And then in terms of events, in the fall here we're working on getting material to put on the County's – on a dedicated page on the PDS website – coming out to you to share this early draft of the engagement plan and starting some interviews, and thinking about developing a survey or some kind of instrument to get at the broader input. And then in the winter have more stakeholder meetings – it could be focus groups or standing bodies – and share some of the early finding on the information on the effect of agritourism in the case studies. And then in the spring and summer do more events, potentially outdoors if conditions allow. And then maybe share some of the information in a way that people can also interact with it outside of meetings through a story map and then again bringing those concepts out to standing bodies like the Planning Commission, Ag Advisory Board, and Board of County Commissioners. So different ways meetings and online and potentially outdoor activities.

So if you any other thoughts on the type and timing of events we're interested in that. We were hearing from a stakeholder about that we're kind of hitting this at the right time for the wide range of agritourism events from birding to other festivals and activities that start happening at different times, and then the wedding season or other activities that could happen over this time period.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Grueter: Yeah, so that's back to our schedule just as a way of showing our next steps again. And I think we're sort of in the three phases of sort of information gathering and then bringing that out with options and then bringing back a more formed proposal for you over this year.

So, Peter, did I miss anything? Do you want to share anything before we open up again for questions?

Mr. Gill: No. I just want to let people know that are watching potentially or have joined the meeting they can send us comments to – my email there at [pgill@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pgill@co.skagit.wa.us). Maybe the next touchpoint on this for the Planning Commission is to get them the situation assessment and see if they have any feedback on that and any input on that or anything that we've missed that we really need to consider. We'd really like some feedback on that. And, you know, if you can do us any favors it would be to reach out to your network within the county – because everybody has got a different group of people – and let them know this is happening so the first time they hear about it or see a little ad about it or get something on their social media they're not completely taken aback or aren't afraid to engage.

Chair Raschko: Okay, are there any questions or comments for Lisa or for Peter?

Mr. Gill: Looks like Mark Knutzen has a question.

Chair Raschko: Okay, go ahead, Mark. Thank you, Peter.

Commissioner Knutzen: Yes, my question would be, What effect, if any, the COVID-19 restrictions that keep coming down the pike may have on the scheduling that we've seen here?

Mr. Gill: Yeah.

Ms. Grueter: Peter, do you have a –

Mr. Gill: Yeah, you can chime in, Lisa, but what I would say is it makes our jobs a lot harder in terms of reaching out and trying to engage people. We're not going to have those open air venues or festivals or things like that to try to reach people, and so – yeah, it is. It makes everything that we do a little bit harder in getting people to truly engage, and (to) really jump into these documents is going to be hard without any of that personal connection. So, yeah, that doesn't solve our problems. There is some technology stuff that we'll be looking at to try to make this more engaging but it really doesn't make up for showing up at the \_\_\_\_.

Ms. Grueter: In some respects we've seen more engagement sometimes when people – you know, if the meetings are timed well or if we can find those stakeholders for interviews. We've found a lot of good information that way. And we're hopeful, I guess, that if things improve with a vaccine and there's more flexibility that in the spring there could maybe be some opportunity to be out in the field a little bit.

Chair Raschko: I have a question for you, Lisa. Can you just tell us a little bit about yourself and a little bit about BERK? You know, where you're from and –

Ms. Grueter: Oh, sure. Yeah. Well, I'm Lisa Grueter. I'm a principal at BERK Consulting. It's a 25-person public policy firm and we do land use planning and finance and economics and strategic planning, and our firm has been around – it was founded by Bonnie Berk about 30 or so years ago. I've been there about ten years. Peter mentioned I do a lot of Growth Management Act work. I also do a lot of work on both rural and urban planning. I work with the Voluntary Stewardship Program with Chelan County and Yakima County so I'm engaged with those producers there. I've done rural lands studies for Clark and Whatcom County over time, and I really enjoy sort of knowing that it's important to get the overall economy and ag viability right as well as all the \_\_\_\_ urban areas. So that's myself, and then I have a colleague, Viv Savath, who's working on the economic side of things, and Chloe Kinsey, who's helping us with data. I should also mention that our firm has worked with Skagit County before. We helped PDS with some elements of the Comprehensive Plan update in 2016. We did a little bit of work on a latecomers code a couple of years ago. And we were – my colleague Viv Savath was helping a bit with the analysis and engagement for the Guemes Ferry fairly recently – so in addition to kind of doing the work across the state. We're pretty state-focused in Washington state but we have worked in Skagit.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. I think – Peter, I'm actually losing the sound feed now off and on, so if I disappear hopefully you can sort of move this thing along? Can you hear me?

Mr. Gill: Yes, yes.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Gill: Will do.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Gill: It looks like you may or may not be able to see this, but Commissioner Hughes and Shea as well as Mr. Hart have their hands up.

Chair Raschko: Okay, so who's first? Commissioner Hughes, please.

Commissioner Amy Hughes: I'd like to start by thanking everyone for the broad approach that's being taken on this subject. I think it's going to be a better decision on everyone's part by the depth of study that's being discussed. One of the things I would like to bring up is that January and February there's a lot of local agriculture meetings that go on since it's the winter months, and if you're wanting to make contact with producers I'd see if you could get into those meetings with this subject.

Mr. Gill: Great. Commissioner Hughes, do you mind if we reach out to you to kind of follow up on that?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: You got a thumbs up. Can you hear now, Peter? I'm sorry.

Mr. Gill: Yep, I got that. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: And then after – thank you, Amy. After Amy we had – who else had a –

Hal Hart: Commissioner Shea?

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Shea, please. Go ahead.

Commissioner Shea: I pulled my hand down. That's all you have.

Chair Raschko: You pulled your hand down?

Commissioner Shea: Oh, sorry. I took my hand down. I don't have a question anymore. \_\_\_\_\_.

Chair Raschko: All right, and then who else did we have?

Mr. Gill: Hal. Hal had something to add.

Chair Raschko: Okay, go ahead, Hal, please.

Mr. Hart: Yes. In discussion with the Commissioners yesterday, they had asked us to reach out and coordinate with other tourism activities over at Economic Development – so at EDASC – so we'll be in contact with EDASC. We sent them an email today just to introduce them to the project and to see what their year looked like at this point.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you. I apologize, everybody. My sound now is so broken up I've kind of lost the ability to keep track of what's going on. So I'd ask Amy, do you want to go ahead and lead this through the end? Excuse me, I meant Tammy.

Commissioner Candler: Certainly I can do that. I think it's appropriate now if there's no other hands to ask if, Peter, if there's anything further on that topic.

Mr. Gill: I think we got through everything. Lisa, was there anything else?

Ms. Grueter: No, I think this is very helpful.

Mr. Gill: I appreciate your time that you've given us to present this so, yep, we're good. Thank you.

Commissioner Candler: Okay.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you. With that, we'll turn to the Director Update.

Mr. Hart: Thank you, Commissioners. Peter, I sent you an updated email – just FYI. Not a big deal.

Mr. Gill: I got it. Just bear with me for a sec.

Mr. Hart: Yep.

Mr. Gill: Switch things around.

Mr. Hart: Okay. Great. Thank you, Peter. So at the moment we have two large projects that are kind of moving forward. This is the first of them that you're being briefed on but we'll keep you in the loop on the Shoreline Update as well. We've continued to work with our consultant from the Watershed Company. We had phone calls with Dan Nichol, the Department of Ecology, and we'll be continuing to coordinate with the Commissioners. They will then give us some direction about how they want to see the project go forward and we expect to have that in the next month from the Commissioners. So that's – look forward to that because we have a tough, tough effort in front of us because we only have six months, and as the Commissioners just realized that with COVID things are difficult as they are and so I think we've got to really step up in our monthly communications to you and to other groups in the county as to what we're going to be doing. So again, that's – Shorelines is going kind of parallel with us with a goal of getting some of the work done – a *lot* of the work done – by June of next year. So we'll be bringing that to you as we move forward. And Peter's definitely a big part of bringing you that one forward as well.

So as I mentioned before on the ag tourism update, we'll be reaching out. Just in the next few days I'm certain we'll have emails even this evening from Mr. Sternlicht from the EDASC and tying in with their efforts at countywide tourism. So there's a lot of overlap but we've been directed to do that so we'll bring that back to you as well. And, I mean, I think monthly going forward so at each of our Planning Commissions. If there's anything new, that's going to be on my list to tell you in terms of overall direction. We're also coordinating in these efforts \_\_\_ with the ag folks and the Ag Advisory group as well.

We mentioned Voluntary Stewardship Program. I don't have an update on that. I don't know if, Peter, you've heard anything more on Voluntary Stewardship. But our goal is to get the January 2021 report into the hands of the Commission, so that's, you know, 35 days out or so.

The other thing I want to bring up – you can go to the next slide – I don't often – oh, well, yeah, actually have two slides. Good. There is – housing remains to be a big deal for the Commissioners and for the County. And the very interesting thing that's going on now – you can see where there is housing here. We have 70 mixed use housing units on the left going in in Burlington, but they actually have two other very large projects going on in Burlington right now. And then Anacortes has the one that you're seeing there. But I was contacted by developers wanting to go to Anacortes and do several five-story buildings as well. So we're getting a different kind of development, a different kind of investor, and if you would just think of it as there's not a lot of single-family residential lots left in a lot of these places. They are infilled already. And so they're looking at this kind of infill, which is consistent with their own plans to go up and reinvigorate districts in certain areas of their cities. And so we're starting to see that.

The other one I'll bring up, which I think I've mentioned before, is we have a seven-unit development in Mount Vernon proposed in probably a 200 – 170 to 200 in the downtown area. So there are other projects in downtown Mount Vernon that we expect in the future just in terms of overall housing effort. The one thing I don't have for you in housing today and I hope to get it is a list of the subdivisions that we're expecting and how many lots would be created over the next year or two in the rural county. So that's something we would watch to see how many – you know, what is the likelihood that lots will be created and where will they be created? So I hope to bring that to you by year's end. I'm trying to do a report on that for the Commissioners as well.

Finally, one other thing is compliance cases, because I spend a lot of time each day talking to our compliance team. And what are we working on? These are the things that are taking a lot of time. We have zoning issues and use issues around unpermitted kennels. We have several of those right now. We have people in RVs year around, and that's inconsistent with the code right now. We have a lot of transient camping and unpermitted RV parks. So people have set these up and we are – as we find them and there are complaints about garbage and those kinds of thing, we respond to those complaints and usually it's a multi-agency response that – sometimes it is the police in a different jurisdiction or a nearby jurisdiction – our police as well – and we're responding.

Then the fourth one after transient camping in unpermitted RV parks that we're responding a lot to these days, are unpermitted junk yards out there. So we get a lot of complaints from county residents with regards to all these things, and I just thought I'd bring that to you because we see the complaints but I don't know if you do. So just as an FYI. Thank you, Commissioners.

Commissioner Candler: And I don't know whether Tim can hear, so I would ask: Is that the completion of your update, Mr. Hart?

Mr. Hart: Yes, it is. Thank you.

Commissioner Candler: Then we will move on to Planning Commissioner Announcements. Does anyone have anything? I guess maybe just raise your hand. Chairman Raschko, I think I heard you speaking. I don't know if you're able to hear.

Chair Raschko: Well, I can hear now.

Commissioner Candler: Okay.

Chair Raschko: Okay, so we're at Planning Commissioner Comments and Announcements, so we'll start with Commissioner Knutzen.

Commissioner Knutzen: I have nothing. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: All right. Commissioner Shea?

Commissioner Shea: Nothing for me.

Chair Raschko: All right. Commissioner Woodmansee?

Commissioner Woodmansee: I just wish you all a happy Thanksgiving, and stay safe this week.

Chair Raschko: Very kind. Thank you. Commissioner Rose?

Commissioner Rose: I don't have anything – other than ditto!

Chair Raschko: Okay. Commissioner Lundsten?

Commissioner Lundsten: Yeah, everybody have a good weekend. Stay healthy.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Commissioner Hughes?

Commissioner Hughes: Nothing.

Chair Raschko: Nothing? Okay. And Commissioner Candler?

Commissioner Candler: I'll join the crowd – Happy Thanksgiving!

Chair Raschko: And I wish the same \_\_\_\_\_ our guest tonight from BERK Consulting, and thank you, staff, for the hard work. And with that, we'll be adjourned.