

**Skagit County Planning Commission
Open House/Public Workshop: 2016 Comprehensive Plan Housing Element
February 17, 2015**

Commissioners: **Josh Axthelm, Chair**
Keith Greenwood, Vice Chair
Kevin Meenaghan
Matt Mahaffie
Kathy Mitchell
Tammy Candler
Annie Lohman
Robert Temples
Amy Hughes (absent)

Staff: **Dale Pernula, Planning Director**
Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner

Presenters: **Wayne Crider, Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association**
Bob Hicks, County Public Health & Community Services Department
Paul Weiss, North Puget Sound Association of Realtors
Ron Wortham, Skagit/Island Counties Realtor Association

Consultant: **Lisa Grueter, BERK Consulting**

Chair Josh Axthelm: I'd like to welcome you all out to today's Planning Commission meeting. It's a little different format today. And first I'd like to – you should have an agenda, if you didn't get one out there. First I'd like to introduce the Planning Commission. I'm Josh Axthelm, the Planning Commission Chair. Keith Greenwood is the Vice Chair. He's standing. Just let everybody see you. Okay. And then – I'm terrible with names, especially when I'm nervous. So if you introduce yourself – thank you.

Kevin Meenaghan: Kevin Meenaghan.

Matt Mahaffie: Matt Mahaffie.

Kathy Mitchell: Kathy Mitchell.

Tammy Candler: Tammy Candler.

Annie Lohman: Annie Lohman.

Chair Axthelm: Thank you for coming out tonight. And I will pass the agenda over to Dale.

Dale Pernula: I just have a few things to go over. For those who don't know me, my name is Dale Pernula. I am the Director of the Skagit County Planning and Development Services

Department. And welcome here. This is an important topic. First of all, the first question is: Why are we here? What are we doing tonight? In general, you should address housing issues in your Comprehensive Plan. And very specifically the Washington Growth Management Act requires housing as one of its required elements of comprehensive plans. And I'll read to you what the Growth Management Act says, and this is what we have to address.

A housing element ensuring the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods that: (a) Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth; (b) includes a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences; (c) identifies sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and (d) makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs for all economic segments of the community.

We have that in our current Comprehensive Plan and now we're updating the data and updating this element to the Comprehensive Plan.

So now I'd like to turn it over to – well, let me go over our agenda, the rest of the agenda for tonight first. First of all, we had the open house. That was from 5:30 till 6. Now at 6 we're going to have the introductions by Josh and myself. At 6:10 we'll have some brief presentations on Skagit County housing issues. At 6:45 we'll break up into some small discussion groups and ensure that everyone has the ability to speak. The Planning Commission will be dispersed among the group in smaller groups, et cetera. Then at 7:45 we will have a break, another mix and mingle period of time, then at 8:05 the Planning Commission will continue with a discussion of the issues that were identified.

And first I'd like to at this time introduce Kirk Johnson. He is a Senior Planner. He is a long range planner with our department, the Planning and Development Services Department. Kirk?

Kirk Johnson: So I'm just going to go one step more detail than Dale did in terms of what's in the current Comprehensive Plan that we'll be discussing today and that the Planning Commission and the County will be thinking about updating for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update.

So I don't know if you all have this handout. It starts with "Welcome" on the front page. So it lists out the goals of the existing Skagit County Planning – or Comprehensive Plan Housing Element, and it's actually one of the briefer elements or chapters in the Comprehensive Plan. And the goals generally track those that are in the Growth Management Act.

So Goal A: Ensure that the supply of housing and sufficient land capacity keep pace with population growth.

So this is one of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan that is very dependent on population growth as well as employment growth, and those are two of the key factors that we're updating through this 2016 Update of the Comprehensive Plan. Our last major update was in 2007 so there's been a lot of change since then and so we need to think about how new population – what kind of new housing needs that creates.

Goal A1: Maintain a progressive program of financial, regulatory, and development measures that will produce opportunities for a full range of housing affordability.

Goal B: Strive to preserve, conserve, and enhance the existing housing stock, including historic structures and sites, and develop design guidelines and standards to improve the quality of new housing consistent with applicable building codes.

So there's an emphasis there on the existing, maybe traditional, older housing stock as well as ensuring that the new housing that's built is of a certain quality and fits into the community.

Manage regulatory, administrative, funding and information programs that contribute to the development and maintenance of high quality housing and strong communities throughout the county.

It's worth noting now, and we'll go back to it many times, that – so we have the County here. I think we have some city representatives. I'm sure – let's see – the new Mount Vernon Planning Director's here and I think a lot of the housing organizations that are here work in the cities. I know there's some people from the Anacortes Housing Authority and the like. So really this is – housing is not just a County thing and it's not just a city thing. There are some key challenges, say, for a county trying to ensure not only housing variety but also housing affordability because some of the tools that you have for affordability are higher residential densities and multifamily-type units, and we really – there's nowhere in the county outside of the incorporated cities where we can do that. But the County does provide services and assistance through the Health & Community Services Department that benefits people who live in the communities. And the County has pulled together, through the County Commissioners, an affordable housing task force which includes, I think, all of the major city planning directors. So it's really kind of a shared responsibility and goal to try to address the housing needs of the county both within the jurisdiction that the County has as well as the cities and towns.

Let's see. I don't recall if I read C or not. I don't think so. *Strive to ensure that a variety of housing types, densities, and value can be produced in the rural area, the Urban Growth Areas, and Rural Villages appropriate to the character of the individual communities.* And each of those types of communities, obviously, has a very different character. A Rural Village is a small enclave in the rural area, whereas an Urban Growth Area or a city is where you expect urban-type development.

Ensure the availability of housing for people with special needs.

Strive for an adequate supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers in the agriculture industry.

And recognize the value of manufactured housing as an affordable housing solution.

So when the County's Comprehensive Plan was created and then when we reviewed it back in 2005 for the 2007 Update, that's the goal and policy framework that people who worked on this in the past have established in the Comprehensive Plan and that's the starting point for this Update that you'll all be talking about tonight.

So, Dale, do you want to – do you want to introduce the next person?

Dale Pernula: The next speaker will be Wayne Crider. He's with the Skagit/Island County Builders Association. Wayne?

Wayne Crider: Good evening. I don't have that much to say really, because they said everything, okay? But, anyway, I'll take a shot at it.

It's my pleasure to address some of the issues that we have here in Skagit County this evening, and a lot of it is not just Skagit County. It's the nation. Okay? Let me reinforce the notion that right now there is a shortage of housing in Skagit County. We recognize that. We know that. Currently we have a phenomenon in the country that explains why we are seeing a growing demand and a shortage of housing at every level. A recent study called "Boomerang Millennials" found that many of this age group moved out of their parents' home and then back in upon completion of college or for other reasons. They also found that the higher incidence of this was what they call "relaunch" from this generation than ever before, and it came from homes that had the higher income. The parents had a higher income. So it was kind of interesting to find that. The lower income homes and the people that went through high school but not to college, it seemed that 42% of them boomeranged, whereas 55% of the others boomeranged. So now those people have started finding jobs now that the economy is coming back, and they can earn an income and they want to purchase a home of their own. So not only do we have the people that are moving up in our society to want to find a house, we have those people that are getting ready to come back. Okay?

Now since the recession the home building industry's been slow in Skagit County. All of the builders that are in our association tell me that they are as busy as they can be right now. But I think you'll find that permits are still down. Permits are starting to increase in numbers now, but our builders are having to schedule these further on down the line as the year goes because they don't have qualified help or qualified employees or people that they can find to hire to come to work for them so that they can expand their business and expand their workforce. So that's where we are now as a builders association. We're having trouble finding qualified workers. And I know that with the recent court findings, building in the rural area of the Skagit River basin won't happen for the foreseeable future. So this drives the need for housing in Skagit County into cities and urban growth areas where people can have access to the services. In the current Comprehensive Plan, the ratio is 20% rural and 80% in cities and UGAs. This will probably need to be revisited in this Comprehensive Plan Update because of lack of services available in the county.

So what's this going to do? I think cities are going to have to look at their planning documents and probably come up with a way to allow more multifamily housing than what they're allowing now. They might have to build up or expand their UGAs – whatever they need to do to provide the services and provide the housing for the demand that's coming up.

In our industry we build whatever's necessary to meet the needs of a community, group, or individual. We respond to the need and the demand for housing. We don't create either one of those. So if somebody says we create a demand, no, we don't. We address a demand, okay? Our industry consists of single-family residential contractors, multifamily, and commercial contractors. And, like I said, most of them tell me that personally they are extremely busy right now.

So with this slowdown, regardless of the need and demand there is a slowdown on the amount of work and the amount of product that can be put forth because we don't have the workforce. Now what happened to our workforce? When the recession hit and some of our builders went

out of business they moved to other states, they moved to tech jobs – different things like that – and they're not willing to come back until they see quite a bump in our economy here, which has been very slow coming.

So when you're going through the different parts of the Element, keep in mind the need for predictability. We need a true buildable lands inventory. Some of those have been inflated. We need a true buildable lands inventory. Working with cities and villages to promote quality housing through remodel or new construction, possibly looking at ways to bring city services to the abutting rural area in order to accommodate the growth that is expected over the next few years. Then we have to consider the added burden of the boomerang millennials that hadn't been thought about or considered in the past. And please keep in mind the cost of housing, whatever type, to encourage those entering the real estate market to take advantage of what is available. While GMA requires Elements that address housing for all, it does not mean everyone has to own their own home.

Finally, there are a lot of questions that'll need to be answered while this process is going on. None of them are going to be easy. And we'll be there to help you in any way we can. Thank you.

Mr. Pernula: Thanks. Those are some important points. The next speaker will be Bob Hicks. He's with the Skagit County Public Health & Community Services Department.

Bob Hicks: Hello. Thanks for coming out tonight. I'm Bob Hicks. I'm with Skagit County Public Health & Community Services and I've also helped in coordinating the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee that was referenced earlier by Kirk. And they have compiled lists of recommendations in a report to the Commissioners, and Paul Schissler has been a huge help as a community development planner and really sculpted this report and it has a lot of key information in it and is wonderful at a snapshot of our community. And we're lucky that Paul was funded by CDBG grants, so it's federal grant dollars that supported him and our community made good use of that.

So we have all the right ingredients here in Skagit. We just need more private sector capacity, and we do that through policies that incentivize housing development and funding to have private sector activities facilitated and feasible.

What's affordable housing? The HUD definition and that people generally accept is 30% or less of one's income – household income – goes towards housing. And when we compiled the report, Skagit had two out of every five households could not afford their housing. So that's 17,000 households. In addition to that, in the next 15 years projecting out there'll be 4,500 additional households that are not affordable that have a housing cost burden. So that'd be over 21,000 households in Skagit without affordable housing.

And if you look here, this is some updated numbers, and on the left-hand side are owners, so people that own their home. And the lack of affordable housing went from 20% of homeowners in 1990 all the way – almost doubled: 39.7% in 2012, the most recent numbers we have. But more extreme is renters who have gone from 36.3% in 1990 – were in housing that they were cost-burdened, that wasn't affordable – that went all the way up to 57.7, which is also quite a bit more than Washington state. What does that mean? It means somebody basically needs \$18 an hour salary to have – to be able to afford (a) rental unit here in Skagit. And the average renter only makes \$11 an hour. So we need to shrink that gap to make it work for people at varying incomes.

One of the reasons is that the market doesn't incentivize a lot of affordable housing, especially multifamily units. And you can see from the heyday in 1990 to '95 we had a lot of units being built, and then in – it really tailed off after the recession, and permits issued were none in 2012 and none in 2013. I don't know what '14 ended up, but it's similarly very low. So if we don't have permits to build apartments, duplexes, it really is a barrier for people with low income. The vacancy rates go way down. It's hard to get an apartment. So that's the issue that we're facing in the community. But one thing is I used to go to a meeting and this guy would always say, We all sit around and admire the problem. So people look at this as a problem so big and then everyone feels sorry for themselves and nothing happens. So we need to really start chipping away at this. If it's 17,000 and we are able to build one unit tomorrow, it'll be 16,999, I think – if the math is right there.

So when we do, how do we build affordable housing? How do we go from a low wage job into a housing wage job? We find ways to fund that. When we do – when we do bring that in and support people in their housing, an average of \$4,000 is – the landlord still gets the \$4,000 and it's non-local funding – most of it – and that means that additional \$4,000 that the person has, they go out and buy things in the community and that's one of the economic drivers. \$4,000. If we started getting successful and solved 1/17th of the problems, we have 1,000 units that are now affordable that weren't before out of that 17,000. Even that kind of meager percentage would be four million dollars in the economy that we pumped out there that people would be buying, you know, groceries, clothes, gas, computers – whatever people buy.

In addition to that is in affordable housing I think we have to start looking at it as an economic driver because the jobs in construction. The plan is to get an ongoing queue of affordable housing projects going so that every year we're looking at: What's the next thing? How can we chip away at this? And if we're successful with that, that provides a lot of construction. I know Wayne said everyone's so busy so we might have a problem with building up the capacity locally just with that, but it would provide a lot of work. Homes are an important part of an infrastructure. This next one, I think, is really important – is that 50% of the jobs are projected to be on the lower end wage over the next 20 years. So that's more at the \$11 per hour salary or wage. We want to keep those people in the county so they don't just bounce around. If they learn their job, they have more skills and that employers don't constantly have a revolving door of employees. So if they have housing that's stable and that they're committed to, they will end up being better employees and enrich our community.

A couple other things is it increases the local tax base and we can leverage funds, and by this I mean you can often have a small local investment that will bring a large, non-local – we can leverage it for a lot of large, non-local funding. So a project could have 90% of the funds from outside of Skagit and we would have to cobble together the 10% to make it work. But that brings – 90% of those funds come into our community, so it's a real economic driver when we can do this.

And how are we going to do it? Here's some of our recommendations:

- One is implementing the Countywide Planning – we're here tonight doing planning. So that's one thing.
- Actions called in comprehensive plans
- Regional cooperation. I'm going to talk a little bit about that in a moment involving a home program.

- And making public dollars do double duty. That's by leveraging. So we use a little public dollars – that goes to the project. But in addition to that it brings in money from the outside.

Some ways to get funding involved are:

- Community Development Block Grants, so we hope to sort of be able to get in a line to apply for those. It comes down through the state. It's federal dollars.
- I mentioned CDBG funded Paul's work here so we've been blessed by that already. We can reapply when we need further planning work.
- The Home Investment Partnership Consortium – that's HUD funding that we just received notice that we will get in Skagit County. And that's a three – we're not big enough to get that program, so we have a three-county region with Whatcom and Island, so we're like the first one in the state to get three counties to work together and to get this funding. For Skagit it'll mean \$200,000 in tenant-based rental assistance. So it just shows that sometimes when you're – you don't have the size, if you partner, especially regionally, you can get a lot of – a big return on it.

Some other sources are the Washington State Housing Trust Fund, federal tax credit, CDFI, and other sources.

And some new local funding choices – we have to bring a little of our own money to the table to attract the big money. So the good thing is that any kind of resource counts. So if it's a property, land for housing, in-kind staff – any of that counts towards match that we can leverage. General funds can support. Now the counties and the states – I mean, counties and cities – used to have maybe a little bit more leeway. Our budgets have shrunk so maybe that's not available right now, but who knows in the future – our economy keeps growing we might have some extra funds there to do that. In Bellingham and in Seattle the voters approved tax measures to fund housing. I don't know the likelihood of doing that here, but it's one idea that we throw out there.

One that might be more likely is distressed/rural sales tax, which is usually used for infrastructure, and we consider affordable housing to be infrastructure crucial to our community. So that's a possibility.

And we have a lot of things that are happening already. The ten-year plan to end homelessness is primarily concerning rental assistance, homeless shelters, transitional housing, and resources that support people to stay in housing who have special needs. So that is a little different than what we're talking tonight. We're talking more about housing stock. But it fits hand in glove with one another. Oftentimes people that need affordable housing also have been homeless and need that opportunity once their life stabilizes.

Farmworker Housing Trust Advisory Council: We're a rural community and we want to preserve that flavor – not that flavor – what's the word I'm trying to say? We want to preserve that. Let's say that. And working so both growers and farmworkers can benefit from having housing options would be great to build that up.

Expand capacity of home ownership programs, especially ones we have locally like Home Trust of Skagit, Habitat for Humanity. And, as I mentioned before, continuing a queue of affordable rental projects so we keep those rolling through, constantly sort of chipping away. And last is invest both in renovation and new construction. So thank you.

Mr. Pernula: Our next speaker will be Paul Weiss with the North Puget Sound Association of Realtors.

Paul Weiss: Well, I thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight. I'm going to bring you some good news, okay? First of all, the good news: The housing market is doing well. Our inventory rates are at the lowest levels they've been – well, maybe this is bad news in this group – but our inventory rates for homes for sale are the lowest rates they've been since before 2000. Home prices in what I consider affordable housing – under 350 to 4 – are rising and on the increase. Upper end housing tends to be stabilizing.

We do have – you know, North Puget Sound Association of Realtors, we promote home ownership and property rights for private citizens. Our absorption rate of the current housing markets, which tells us about how much inventory we have left, is about 25% countywide – 20 to 25% countywide. I spend most of my time working in the Anacortes area. I come over here a bit. We have 100 homes for sale in Anacortes when I checked Tuesday. In January, 28 homes went pending. So in four months we'd be out of inventory right now for housing.

We want to focus here tonight, I think, on what's going to promote growth and development, and we want to mitigate the things that are going to inhibit growth and development. I'll share with you a quick story about some clients I've been working with. A young couple – he's a teacher. She works for a crisis – local crisis pregnancy center – one of them around here. And they have been trying to buy – they want to build equity. They've been trying to buy property that they could build a duplex. They won't consider Mount Vernon at all because of the costs. They thought they had a wonderful opportunity over in Burlington about a year, year-and-a-half ago until they discovered that the impact fees of \$12,500. They thought, Okay, we can build this duplex. We can get in it. We can rent the other side and build equity. They want to achieve the American dream – until they discovered that with that duplex their impact fees were doubled and it was 25,000 and it wasn't affordable anymore. That's part of the problem that we face.

We need to create some balance in our zoning. And I'm not familiar with the zoning in every city and every part of the county right now, but I do know in Anacortes specifically we have an abundance of commercial space and we can't rent it. We don't have the jobs. We don't have the industry. We need to create housing in that zoning. When I look at cities that have been very successful in this in recent years I look at Everett, I look at Bellingham, and they have created housing that has gone up in their waterfront and downtown districts where the jobs are. People want to live where the jobs are and I think we need to look at some of those options as well.

So that's some of the good news. I'm going to bring a colleague of mine up here right now – Ron Wortham – many of you know, and he's going to share some other statistics with you tonight.

Ron Wortham: I'm Ron Wortham. I'm the Government Affairs Director for Skagit-Island County for the Realtor Association. Since the Great Recession – is what we call it – after we've finally crawled out of that, Skagit County was looking at about a year to two-year of inventory. It was dead. Interest rates were cheap. And no one was looking. We were scared to – you know, the builders were all – didn't have work. They were leaving the area. So it was very quiet. But in the last four years things have changed and are changed more dramatic in Skagit County than they have from King County, Snohomish County and our county. They have about a two months' supply in King County, around 2.8% supply in Snohomish, and we're at 4%. We were at 8+% a year ago, so we've had a 50% shift of available housing options for inventory – more dramatic

than those other three counties. So we're looking at – the inventory is scarce. Lots are getting scarce. We had more lots to throw into the river a couple years ago but now they're drying up. Average price of a lot under 150,000s – we have about 170 lots available for about 105,000. But lots can go up to 350,000 if you want a nice view of the mountains and 20 acres. But the availability of water has curtailed the availability to build out in the county. With the Supreme Court decision it's severely limited the availability to build. And the affordability issue right now it's cheaper to buy a house with 3.7% interest rates, and if you're a vet you're looking at closer to 3 even – 3.125 – it's historic low. So we have a lot of demand and people want to get in a house, but the supply has been chopped in half. But the impact fees to build a new home for Wayne – the largest city in the county it's over \$30,000 for impact fees when you add in the impact fees plus hooking up your PUD and sewer. That's before you move a blade of grass on that lot. So the cost to build is fairly high. So we don't – and our average house is about 235,000 in Skagit County and that's kind of skewed with Anacortes. It's a lot higher. But that's about where we are. And King County, just for example, it's 400,000 on their mean numbers. So we're still affordable compared to people coming from down south. They want to come up here. They want to retire here. We see a lot of 55 and older projects that are filling up the minute they make them available. So the environment's changed dramatically there.

Mr. Weiss: Ron I want to answer that real quick, if I can. I recently read just in the last couple weeks that Anacortes is one of the more – or pardon me – Skagit County is one of the more expensive counties in our state to move to for the affordability factor when you take away the average living wage job versus the cost of housing.

Mr. Wortham: Right, our average income, I think, is 55,000, I believe – 54,000. When they did the first Comp Plan of '97 it was around 30,000, so you can see the income on the average has gone up. But there you go. Thank you.

Mr. Pernula: Now I'd like to introduce Lisa Grueter. She is a consultant who's helping us develop this chapter of our Comprehensive Plan. She is a consultant with BERK Consulting.

Lisa Grueter: Thank you. What we'd like to do is just a few minutes of general question and answer, including for the speakers that just gave you some background information. So if we could have maybe two or three questions, and then what we'll do after this is we're going to break into small groups and go through several questions together so you'll have plenty of time to discuss a lot of the information.

Any general questions about the Housing Element or some of the points that were brought up by our speakers? Yes?

Ed Stauffer: I take it from the speakers that they've given up on the Skagit basin for homeowners, home sites, for unincorporated Skagit County? I'm wondering if they're aware that that same legislation extends not only to the entire unincorporated county, but also to every county in the state of Washington.

Ms. Grueter: Which of our speakers wants to speak to rural housing?

Mr. Weiss: Are you speaking specifically of the water issue?

Mr. Stauffer: Yes.

Mr. Weiss: I'll say on behalf of the Association of Realtors we're still very actively involved in pursuing water rights up in those areas.

Mr. Stauffer: As it stands now, the market is dead. Lending agencies will not finance interruptible water supplies.

Mr. Wortham: That's correct. It's going to be a surprise to a lot of people.

Ms. Grueter: Other questions before we move to our small groups? Okay. Yes, sir?

Unidentified male voice: I'm kind of curious, Ron. You talked about impact fees. How have they changed in the last ten years? You were saying \$30,000 for Mount Vernon.

Mr. Wortham: They've probably gone up quite a bit – 10,000, yeah.

Same unidentified male voice: In ten years?

Mr. Wortham: Yeah.

Mr. Crider: About five years in the city of Mount Vernon a builder would have to take \$27,000 with him when he applied for a permit for a regular 1500 square foot house – somewhere in that area. That was all your hook-ups, building permit fees, and _____. That was up front.

Mr. Wortham: And all those costs get passed on to the home buyer.

Mr. Crider: Yes, they do.

Ms. Grueter: All right, what I'd like to do is walk through the questions that we have. They are on the last sheet of the handout that shows you all of the boards.

Our first question that you'll get a chance to discuss is related to one of the goals that Kirk described earlier. And so the question is: What can Skagit County do to "preserve, conserve, and enhance the existing housing stock" in its rural communities and neighborhoods, consistent with Goal B of the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element? So that's one that's getting at the rural housing character.

Our second question is about some trends that we're seeing where more than half of the households have small household sizes – either one person or two persons with no children at home. And we're also seeing an aging population which is common to a lot of counties in the state because of the Baby Boomers aging. So our second question is: Given a trend of smaller household sizes and an aging population, what can the County and cities do to promote housing variety for the current and the next generation? Because, again, we're planning 20 years out.

Our third question is related to the two roles that the private and public sector play, and that is: What are the appropriate and respective roles of the private and the public sector in meeting current and future housing needs? Most of the housing stock would be developed by private landowners and developers, but the public sector has a role to play in facilitating affordable housing, as Bob mentioned.

Our fourth question is about the County's role in particular and the cities'. It gives you a little more information. So one of the things the County does under Growth Management is to

allocate growth to the cities, in consultation with the cities, and to the county. The cities have the lion's share of the future growth. So between 2016 and 2036 the County has preliminarily allocated about 37,000 new people within that 20-year period. The County primarily plans for the rural areas. It also plans for the unincorporated Urban Growth Areas until such time as they're annexed by the cities. But the cities take the lion's share of the growth. They plan for more multifamily housing. And we know that there's a gap in this pie of affordable housing, as Bob pointed out, so our question is: Given this gap in the supply of affordable housing for the range of incomes in the county, what role should the County play and what role should the cities have?

And then last we have some information that's been developed locally about the need for farmworker housing in the county. There's been one estimate that over 4,000 farmworker households are living in unaffordable housing and that there's a need for over 800 new housing units affordable to that group. So given the prominence of the agricultural sector to the economy, and with the jobs being located in the rural county but the services being generally in the cities, including infrastructure, what should be the County's role and what should be the cities' role?

So we have those five questions. You can refer to your sheet. What we'd like to do is break up into about six groups. We have six small group facilitators – County staff and consultants – and maybe they could stand and wave. We have Dale, Kirk, Betsy, Bob, Gary and Paul. So they're all standing up around the edges here. We're going to have two groups in this room. Group 1 will be over by the wall and Group 2 will be over by this far wall away from the door. We have one, Group 3, out behind us and then we have three more out in the large room where you started off in the Open House. What we'd like to do is have everyone count off one, two, three, four, five, six and then repeat, and then go to your respective groups and then go through these questions with your facilitator.

So – and with the Planning Commission, we would appreciate if the Planning Commission would not count off and would instead maybe come up to the side and then you'll each join a separate group just so we get good representation of the Planning Commission.

(Group discussions were not recorded and group recaps were not transcribed.)

(Skip to Planning Commission Discussion.)

Chair Axthelm: ... start our portion of it, and to discuss anything we'd like to on the comments that we received. I think we should just go – any suggestions on how we should go through that?

Robert Temples: Want to just do a round robin?

Chair Axthelm: Just go down the line? Okay. Sounds good. Go ahead.

Ms. Mitchell: Want me to start?

Chair Axthelm: Cover all or cover number one, two, three, four each? Go down the line. I think if you cover all of them. Just take the key points that you want to – that you would like to address.

Ms. Mitchell: I think – I'll start this way – I think one of the main things I heard pop up time and again through the initial presentations and then through questions later on were the expense of the impact fees and how they can or should be looked at for justification or explanation of why they are. Things can change over time. And that seems to be a big hindrance for a lot of folks and I think maybe if people understood more about those impact fees and why they're as high as they are, then if there's a possible way to either find some incentives to work with those issues maybe we can address some of the affordable housing issues a little bit easier. I don't know. It's just an idea out there, but I think I heard that enough times that it really makes me wonder about those impact fees.

The other thing, which I don't think anybody really got to touch on too much, was the fifth one, and that was the farmworker issues. I would like to see us come back to that a little bit more in depth somehow because that one really got left out – and it's a big issue – just because it was at the tail end of the questions and that seems like it's a pretty important thing.

And I can think of more things if you want to come back to me at the end.

Chair Axthelm: Robert?

Mr. Temples: Well, I gleaned several things out of what I was hearing tonight. Without a question, on number one I think there is no doubt in my mind, and I'm sure many of the other people I've been talking with, that there is a real need out there for housing and perhaps particularly in the senior arena, and definitely housing for farmworkers is necessary. And I guess from the numbers I've been reading there's a percentage that are here all year long and then there's a large percentage that come during the various seasons when they're needed.

As far as trends, I think we're starting to see some data that supports the trends of smaller housing for a lot of different reasons. I had not thought of – though I must confess I have seen with a lot of family members that I have in my family group that when they're referring to a lot of young people that are sort of boomeranging back to their families or, in some cases, you know, 20 to 30 years old and they haven't even moved out of the house yet. So there's probably all kinds of levels where affordable living needs to be addressed in one fashion or another, and I'd really like to see a little bit more of senior housing development in the county because I think it's very needed.

The cooperation between the private and the public sector I think is absolutely mandatory for a lot of these development projects to proceed forward. Now whether that's encouragement from the County or encouragement that's motivated by the private sector I think is a self-generating thing from either direction. It's needed and I think it needs to be, if anything, maybe – the term I want to use I can't say – advertised – but I think it needs to be promoted.

The county growth overall has been considerably less than what it had been back in the '90s and in the early 2000s, and obviously the economy has a lot to do with that. The affordability of housing has a lot to do with that. But I think we have to look at any avenue that will generate some housing that's *affordable*, because we're not like some of the big counties in western Washington with very expensive properties and housing and everything. We have an aging population that needs some source of finding places to live. And when I found out tonight that we have almost no rentable housing available, I find that absolutely appalling. We need to have something for people.

And question five: I've actually been giving this a little thought and, Dale, I don't know, maybe – I don't know if you want to comment on it or not but I don't know what restrictions we have for temporary housing for farmworkers. I mean, I remember seeing pictures of down in California where they brought in railroad cars full of workers to work on a temporary basis. Now maybe they weren't providing housing. I don't know. But I'm thinking, my God, we've got railroads running all through Skagit County, you know. But I don't know. Maybe the railroads won't let us run passenger trains. But the bottom line is I don't know if there's any way we can bring in temporary units. I don't know what they'd be, but that would be a – I mean, it's a positive move in one direction instead of actually building little houses or whatever out on properties. And that's really all I have to say.

Chair Axthelm: Kevin?

Mr. Meenaghan: Thank you. I had two thoughts. The first is on the first question. It mentions the two words "enhance" and "preserve" what is already existing. And so when I keyed in on that what that meant to me was if we're going to enhance and preserve what's already there, we need those skilled workers and qualified workers to do that kind of stuff. Wayne Crider in his comments – he was the first speaker tonight – he talked about how we don't have those skilled and qualified workers to do that kind of stuff that needs to be done to enhance and preserve, like the first question there talked about. And so although the – although economic development and what we're trying to do at the county level here are maybe divided topics. I think they are. They are very tied together. Because that enhancement and bringing in and keeping and attracting those skilled workers and enhancing and preserving the housing and the living ability that we have is something that we definitely need to do. So economic development and workers, and enhancing and preserving are all tied together whoever is working on that.

The second comment that I had was Goal A talks about – and this is maybe a clarification, but Goal A says "Ensure that the supply of housing and sufficient land capacity keep pace with population growth in the county." And I'm not convinced that the word "capacity" is the right word that we – you know – ought to be used in Goal A because the capacity can't change in the county. I think what needs to change is something really to do with the zoning, and by changing the zoning we therefore can change the capacity. If that's what we're talking about then I think that's something very basic that we need to change in Goal A. So just a thought there.

So that was my two points.

Ms. Lohman: When I read the question number one and it said to "preserve, conserve, and enhance" existing housing, I immediately thought about what we love about Skagit County and it is its rural nature. It is not a suburb of something and we are not a suburb. We don't want to become a suburb, or at least some of us don't want us to become a suburb. So I live out by the Edison area. So when I envision – read number one, I immediately flashed over to what Edison used to be, what Blanchard used to be, what Allen, Bow used to be. They are all independent, thriving communities, all of them unincorporated, all of them had a post office, a little store, maybe a garage of some kind, a mechanic's shop. They were all little hubs. They didn't have everything but they had a little soul. And we still have a lot of those all over the county dotted all over. There's Alger. There's Conway. There's Lake McMurray. There's Big Lake. It goes on and on. Upriver there's Lyman and Hamilton and Birdsview and a lot of these little enclaves. So when I read number one I thought, well, how can we use what's already basically a little platted – not necessarily designated as a Rural Village or a Rural Intermediate, but they're already platted somehow. They already have some really quaint structures, whether it be housing or little, old commercial buildings or old structures of some sort that have been repurposed over

the years. Maybe – like I think of Edison with the old Catholic church that is now a house. I mean a lot of really cool things – can we repurpose these without destroying our identity? We don't want them to be cookie cutter, Tupperware-type housing because that would destroy our soul here and why people come here, why people leave other areas and come here. So that's what I thought of when I read number one. Yes, there're certain situations that need to be solved, like how do you handle septic issues and all of that, but I think we're smart people and we can come up with a lot of things. And didn't Mr. Janicki just come up with something he's, you know, working on? So, I mean, I think some of our manmade problems we can problem-solve those.

Number two where it talked about the growing trend to smaller housing, household sizes and an aging population, I think we need to think out of the box. And there again I'd flash back to some of these rural – old, rural communities that I just mentioned, and I think there's a possibility of revitalizing some of those. Because I don't think we want to create little villages of just old people. I think communities are a lot more healthy when you have a mixture of young and old and different ethnic groups all together – that melting pot, if you will. To me that's a more real America and a real, more us. So I think that we could maybe utilize what we already have. I think we have the tools. We just need to kind of think a little bit differently.

Number three where it talks about the roles of the private and public sectors, I think the public sector can be the incentive provider. And maybe with some tax breaks, but also some incentives for people to invest – maybe volunteer, maybe some sweat equity-type investment. So I think that public-private partnerships are good, but I think that it can't be just providing money. It needs to be providing some kind of ownership-type of incentives.

Number four was probably the hardest question for me because I think without having certain city representatives it's hard to talk about cities and just say, Well, we want to shove all of housing to them. And yet here we are talking about the County Comp Plan. I think we really need to kind of reach out to the city partners and have conversations with them. So I almost think number four is almost sort of premature. I mean, yes, we can talk about the cities but I think we need to bring in the city leadership and have a conversation. That would be a little more meaningful.

And number five – I wish number five was probably number one or number two because it is a big issue in Skagit County. It all goes back to our rural identity and our agriculture. I think it makes absolute sense to locate farmworker housing in the cities because of all of the amenities – the shopping, the – all of the physical plant amenities outside of work. Plus it keeps the population from being isolated. If you have all the farmworker housing out in the rural area, you're isolating a population. I think it's good to have, you know, the population intermingled in the community. They're part of our community. They're vibrant – a vibrant part of our community and a needed, well-respected part of our community.

So those are my thoughts.

Keith Greenwood: Thank you. You know, for me my biggest – I thought there were some real good observations and some good input. I was only in one group but I could see there were a lot of similarities, a lot of overlap. And as I look back as I was reading the goals and the Housing Profile that we describe in the Policies in our current Comp Plan that was last updated in 2007, I see a lot of the same problems identified back then. Very few do I see that are new. It's more maybe we've got some new tools and some new things that have been applied that have been successful. So I guess what I'm looking for as much as anything as a starting point is to take

these ideas and see where they fit into the Policies that were already put in place, but find out which ones are effective and which ones we haven't even tried to address yet.

If farmworker housing has been identified for this long, maybe we're still looking for some out-of-the-box thinking of – maybe some understanding. I think one of our groups talked about finding out what it is both from the farmer and the worker that – what that population really wants and needs so that we can better address it, rather than working from the outside trying to figure it out. Because I think there's a lot of unknowns with that. So I'd like to see an update to the Housing Policy – the *Housing Profile* first before I can really know if these trends are – there were some highlighted trends in our report that we got before we started, but I'd like to see how much of a change because most of them, I think, address the same lack of affordability. There's still that gap. That gap's been going on for some time – so how we're going to address that gap. I've seen some cases where I've seen new developments that incorporate – and I don't know how they did it or why they did it, or maybe they're required to do it; hopefully it was incentivized – but where you've got single-family dwellings and you've got multiple dwellings in the same development. So whether they're creating a community out of it with a variety of housing options, I liked seeing some of that. And I've been through some of those developments where I see single – it looked like a home that's much smaller on a little smaller lot, and it looks like it has the opportunity for a single person – maybe an older person – to live in that single-story dwelling. And you've got another one that could accommodate a little more active family with a few more rooms. To have a single person with these small, little bedrooms in addition – maybe they don't need them quite so much.

So those are my observations, and I really appreciate the input. I thought that there was some really neat contribution from some of the folks who are in the cities, who are actually seeing some creative things put in play.

Chair Axthelm: Tammy?

Ms. Candler: Thank you. This evening has been interesting and I think it's been a little bit difficult because, as the County Planning Commission, we're talking about the cities an awful lot, and I don't know if that was the intention of this meeting. I think it probably wasn't. But it's just natural to do that because most of these uses it's particularly – skipping ahead to number five with the farm – almost everybody, it seems like, across the board is agreeing that the cities are the place for that. So I would like to see more input from the cities as to what their intentions are, what their ideas are going forward. I think it's really important to get them involved in the process, even though we're the County. I just don't think we can separate the two at this stage on this issue.

Let's see. So I would like to see those cooperative discussions. They have all – you know, we have all this discussion about services and how much service can come out into the county under the current regulations, and how much we want out in the county, and it affects increase in housing so much. My sort of thought on all of it is I'd like to see in general sort of more movement upwards instead of outwards in terms of increasing housing and numbers. Again, under the current regulations it's probably more of a city thing. We don't have control of that but I would like to talk about that.

So getting back to the questions: Number one is about the – what Skagit County can do to preserve, conserve, and enhance, and to me the preserve and conserve is a little bit different than enhance. I think we need to look at some of the existing structures – might be appropriate for the historical value that almost everyone's talking about in their small groups, it seems like,

and some of them might be more appropriate for enhancing in terms of expansion on some existing locations that would have maybe less impact on the critical areas and things like that.

Number two, the trend toward smaller household sizes: I think, you know, diversity is where you want to go with that, in my mind. Some of the mixed use downtown areas came up in it seems like most of the groups or several of the groups, and how that works. I think it attracts a population. I was thinking in my own mind of like Belltown area in Seattle is so desirable to so many young people, and also those areas, I think, if developed could be attractive for people who are a little bit less mobile. And that increases the density, of course, if you go up in sort of small units.

Number three is about the respective roles of private and public sector and, you know, the regulations that come from the public sector are dictating where growth in the form of housing is going to occur, and then you have the interaction of the economics of the private sector, and I think it's going to be interesting to see what the Commission can do to try to direct that. I think that that's the most difficult thing. It's what we're – basically the whole thing we're talking about.

As far as number four, I just keep coming back to the same thing. This one, at least the question is about the difference between the County and the cities, but, you know, the bus system, all the central services being located in those cities, I think the cities have a bigger role, if that answers the question.

My small group spent a lot of time talking about number five. I think that was very valuable and helpful to me to try to frame it. We concluded, as it sounds like everyone else did, that that would be a good idea to provide that in the cities but it's the seasonal or sort of transitory nature is a question, I think, in everybody's mind. What happens to that development, if it's to be a new development, at that timeframe when no one's using it for that work? And so there was a gentleman – I think he's gone now – that offered to take a look at that and get some input as to whether or not some of this housing could be just general affordable housing that could just be utilized by farmworkers if there's enough work to keep people in the area that are going to be using that housing. Otherwise I think it's a very different thing to be able to have housing that's vacant or somehow not used. So it's a really difficult question.

That's all I have.

Chair Axthelm: Matt?

Mr. Mahaffie: Quite a bit's been said already. That was quite pleasant to have a different outlook come to me here than what I'm used to with people that are testifying and giving comment. The affordable housing, in my small group especially, was everybody's focus, I think. And the idea of public-private cooperation, and not necessarily making affordable housing by regulation but more by incentive, and the opportunities, you know, coming more recently from a development background. You know, what kind of opportunities are out there for nonprofits and things like that to promote that public-private partnership where you have a public goal of affordable housing yet private corporation/private investment is still getting a return that satisfies them. That was kind of a different outlook and I would definitely welcome anybody from the affordable housing background to come back and, you know, make their views known because we don't normally get that view very often.

But just kind of my general theme on this is the County's been throwing a really big monkey wrench. Our available lands *have* changed. It's gone down drastically, and to keep an 80/20

split, our land inventory I don't think is there without being very creative. And it's time to think outside the box a little bit, I think. We had discussions about, you know, the repurposing of houses and duplexes and empty nesters being able to change a house into a duplex or, you know, loosening the rules on accessory dwelling units, and I think those are very valid discussions to have.

Chair Axthelm: Thank you.

Ms. Mitchell: Josh?

Chair Axthelm: I'll take a chance here. No, I really appreciate all the comments and I think everybody – it seemed like there were a lot of the same comments on a lot of the boards. Some of them were differing views, and it was neat to see the cooperation between everybody. It was a good feeling.

I had some comments and one of them was that, like the first one, I think that the cities and the counties working together is essential. If we don't have the cities and counties working together the problem is you're all doing your own thing and each have a different vision. I think if we could coordinate that a little bit better it might help out. And we're on our way there. We just – it could be worked on more.

On the second one, the density – one of my comments in the group was the density for larger lots – giving the opportunity for those larger lots to be broken down for – not necessarily broken down. Maybe retain them as single lots but allow the ADUs or allow some higher density in ways.

Let's see, the third one: You know, we kind of got stuck on that one and we sidetracked and actually – you know, I thought, Okay, this is sidetracked. How do I get it off of this? But after thinking of it, I think it's a real important issue to bring up. And that's the real problem is not necessarily the affordable housing. It's the wage. There are businesses out there that don't have the wage that supports or that allows us to even afford the housing. Sure, housing needs to be available and that's a factor as well, but maybe there's some way that some of those – the businesses that pay the lower wages and don't offer the higher wages – can offer incentives for housing and work that into it somehow.

Let's see. And number four I had: Encourage more multifamily development by the cities. Getting in some larger buildings; moving up – I've heard that comment quite a bit tonight, even in the open session before. And personally I think some of those, it would be good to be *by* the transit system. Skagit County has the Skagit Transit and has developed that. I remember when I was younger and that came into play. I lived at Skagit County at the time when that started. And I spent some time in Europe and I can really appreciate the mass transit and how that works. And a lot of Europe isn't always trains. There's busses and people congregate around those bus lines as well. And it's encouraging to see that develop. I think if we could get more mass transit around those lines it would be appropriate.

And encouraging the cities – the multifamily development.

Also there seems to be a lot of commercial property in the valley that's open. You look at downtown Mount Vernon and you've got a high vacancy. You've got even out in some of the industrial areas there's more – there's a lot of vacancy going on. And if we could take some of that land or some of that properties and allow redevelopment of them, either by developing

within their footprint or expanding on to them – whatever it takes. Maybe have a combination of mixed use, commercial, and residential, or just redevelopment of a building to residential. We hear about that in big cities where they take an industrial area and totally change it out to a – or maybe have some retail down below but allow the residential up above.

Let's see, also the 80/20 split: I'm in agreement with that. I think that we need to revisit that and consider that – consider, you know, what we have available in the county land.

And the last but definitely not least is also temporary housing for farmworkers. I think that's important. Allowing for – we see these trends now to go towards more dense housing. I think allowing them to have the dense housing is appropriate on a temporary basis, and the importance of stressing the *temporary* is that it's not affordable housing for fulltime, but it's temporary. But those facilities also need to be good facilities for them that are livable.

And I had one more if I can separate my notes here. One might be – I hear a lot of people say about bringing the farmworking into the city, and there may be some conflict there because if they're out working on the farms and bringing a lot of dirt and stuff in. But, on the other hand, there are situations where that would work quite well because they don't have the transit and it gives them the opportunity to go walk where they need to without having to have that available. I think maybe some affordable housing that could be designated during the times when it's needed to have farmworker housing available. Perhaps some housing that might be dedicated for that for a certain period of time. It's just a suggestion, but...

So that's my points. Does anybody else – would you like to go back through?

Ms. Mitchell: Yeah, thank you. I needed to collect my thoughts a little bit after going first. Time and again when we were talking about the affordable housing, in conjunction you hear the term "safe and affordable housing," right? And one of the things I noticed tonight is that we didn't even touch on that at all so I'd just like to throw up the idea or the suggestion that safety is an issue when you do have more people in closer situations together. I don't have the answers for that at all but I do think we should keep that in mind. There's an awful lot of places where they have allowed a lot more dense places and ended up having devalued properties and then other kinds of situations to go with. So if those options are – if those options do progress, then certainly you would need to do everything you can to keep safety in mind, as in not overcrowding.

Another issue, especially from a volunteer first responder status a lot of folks don't see if they're not in those industries, when you do have dense situations there are many times where that means smaller units, smaller apartments, smaller houses. I'm here to tell you it's really hard getting gurneys in and out of places and people up and down stairs and those kinds of things. And I realize that those things can be addressed with building codes and such, but when you put those two things hand in hand oftentimes cost and allowing for that extra room is left out, necessarily so maybe, but that can be a problem.

The other thing that I'd like for people to keep reminding is that as we put more people together those are the times where you have the chances for more illnesses – those kinds of things – when you have people that are compressed. Think about when you were back in college or schools. You're always sick when you're in schools together. And it's just to keep in mind if you do keep people in tighter-knit groups, there is the chance for passing along disease a lot easier.

I do not say that I have the answers on all these things, but I do think that we should put those down and discuss with our DEM officials and also our law enforcement officials their ideas when we tap into the cities on how to keep these things in mind, because our ultimate goal is to have safe and affordable housing and those two should go hand in hand.

Chair Axthelm: Move down the line again real quick? Do you have anything else, Robert?

Mr. Temples: Nope.

Mr. Meenaghan: No.

Chair Axthelm: Annie?

Ms. Lohman: No.

Mr. Greenwood: No, I'm okay.

Ms. Candler: No, thanks.

Chair Axthelm: Okay. I think it's been really productive. I think if the County takes these boards, and it's pretty open what people are looking at, and in each of them there seems to be some common elements that people are asking for.

Mr. Greenwood: Can I ask a question?

Chair Axthelm: Yeah.

Mr. Greenwood: Will there be a summary of the notes that we're taking? Because I noticed some of them were – the presentation was briefer than the information that was on the boards. Can that be summarized, Kirk?

Kirk Johnson: Yeah, we'll have that done.

Mr. Greenwood: Okay.

Chair Axthelm: Okay.

Mr. Greenwood: Correct my misspellings, too, if you would.

Mr. Johnson: Sure.

Chair Axthelm: Okay, so you'll take these and summarize them and put them in a form for the public?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Chair Axthelm: Great. Awesome. All right? I think that – are we okay to –

Ms. Lohman: What – this isn't the last swipe at this by any means, right? What's the plan moving forward with this?

Mr. Johnson: Let's see. I know Commissioner Greenwood asked for – he'd like to see an update of the Profile before you move into the Policy section, so I think that's something that we could move forward with in terms of updating the population figures and the affordability data and the like and bring back to you. I'm not really sure about some of the other issues. I think it would probably require looking at all your comments, comparing them with what's in the current Housing Element with the Policies and the like, and then identifying if there are places where it seems like your comments collectively suggest beefing up some of those Policies or the treatment of some of the issues like affordability or farmworker housing. So, yeah, I don't have an instant answer but maybe we could come back with what we think are some of the issues that you've all kind of highlighted as being important, and then suggest some next steps.

Mr. Greenwood: Yes, because I'm looking at things, Josh, like Kevin mentioned – the difference between zoning versus capacity. So I think there's some – even some – they might seem like small details in the Policies, but if we could go through those Policies and identify some shortcomings or if they're currently addressing the question that's still outstanding and the gap that's still outstanding, how have we – how can we bridge that gap? How can we address it through either the current Policies or maybe we need to enhance the Policies? You know, you have a B-1(b), you know, or something like that. We need to use some thinking along those lines. Especially if it's getting worse, I guess. If that gap is getting worse, that's really important to highlight for us as a body that we're not currently addressing it so we need to bump things up on the incentives, if that's how we're going to do it, or some other way.

Ms. Lohman: But then are we basically highlighting elements in the underlying code that the weakness is, rather than the Policy? Maybe we do some tweaking in the Policy but really where the work gets done is in the code.

Mr. Pernula: Very complex question. These are not easy questions to resolve. For example, the farmworker housing issue is not just a code issue. It's an interjurisdictional issue. It's a funding issue. It's a what kind of demand they have for farmworker housing where it's acceptable not only to the cities or to the farmers but also to residents in the area who don't want their property values to change. Very complicated issue. A lot of these just aren't simple answers that we can come up with tomorrow.

I think you've identified a lot of things. One thing that I heard quite a bit about and Annie brought it up, and that's Rural Villages and how to bring them back to where they once were – maybe enhance them. Can they grow? How much can they grow? But it just seems to me to be an opportunity – and I heard it several times tonight – that at least some housing can be located in some of those areas.

Chair Axthelm: As far as further comments from the public, is there any written comments that are received?

Mr. Johnson: There were yellow comment forms that were placed in a couple places – there's an example there – which we can make available to anyone who wants to submit a written comment like that. We don't at the moment have a way that people can comment on an ongoing basis – say, through the website – on the Housing Element or on other Elements.

Chair Axthelm: Okay. As it's changed and your proposal's given later, then they'll have the opportunity to comment on it?

Mr. Johnson: Right. Yeah.

Chair Axthelm: So this isn't necessarily the final opportunity. We still will be able to comment, correct?

Mr. Pernula: Sure.

Chair Axthelm: Okay.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah. I think we'd probably have a – maybe consolidate all the, you know, the summaries of things of what you've said, of what the boards say, come back together with you, review that again. Maybe say, Here are some areas that – where you seem to indicate you'd like to see some strengthened Policy language, and then you might talk that through and agree or disagree, and then that might go into a draft update of the Housing Element, which would then become a part of the overall 2016 Update proposal, which will then go out for public review and comment on any proposed changes to Policies. So I think it's a several-step process that we're looking at, without knowing exactly what those steps look like at this point.

Chair Axthelm: Yeah. Well, I think it's a good start to it, though – the meeting tonight. Any other comments from the Planning – Tammy?

Ms. Candler: I just wanted to reiterate if it's possible to get the cities involved somehow and have a meeting, that would be helpful for me.

Mr. Johnson: So the Commissioners appointed the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. I keep wanting to call it Task Force, but it's an advisory committee. And it has a number of the housing organizations that are here represented, as well as I think each of – at least all of the cities in the county, I think, are represented by their Planning Directors. And then the city planners and the County planners meet together on a monthly basis through the SCOG Council of Governments – well, the Skagit County Council of Governments. That just seems like a logical place to continue this discussion at the staff level at least, in terms of having – you have the housing interests with the knowledge of that; you have the planning interests with the, you know, the ability to bring to the elected officials issues over the land supply and the rules and the regulations and the zoning and the like. So it seems like that's a real good body to try to make progress and have those interjurisdictional conversations about how to move these issues forward.

Ms. Candler: So if you find out about an agenda where they're going to be looking at that, will you just let us know?

Mr. Johnson: Sure. Yeah.

Chair Axthelm: Okay. I think we've all had an opportunity. So let's go ahead and move on to the Department Update.

Mr. Pernula: I don't have anything to update right now.

Chair Axthelm: Okay. So the next item on our agenda is the Commissioner Comments and Announcements.

Several Commissioners: No.

Chair Axthelm: Okay, so seeing none, do we have a motion to adjourn?

Ms. Lohman: Move to adjourn.

Ms. Candler: Second the motion.

Chair Axthelm: _____ . Okay. This meeting is now adjourned (gavel).