

Skagit County Planning Commission
Deliberations: 2017 Docket of Proposed Policy, Code, and Map Amendments
May 2, 2017

Planning

Commissioners: **Tim Raschko, Chair**
 Kathy Mitchell, Vice Chair
 Kathi Jett
 Martha Rose
 Amy Hughes
 Tammy Candler
 Josh Axthelm
 Annie Lohman (absent)
 Hollie Del Vecchio (absent)

Staff: **Dale Pernula, Planning Director**
 Ryan Walters, Assistant Planning Director
 Stacy Pratschner, Senior Planner

Public Remarks

Commenters: **Carol Ehlers**
 Ed Stauffer
 John Roozen

Chair Tim Raschko: ...the opinion that we barely have a quorum tonight and we are going to be discussing some matters that will require a lot of thought and a lot of points of view, and it is such a topic that you can about guarantee that not everybody will be satisfied with whatever the outcome is. And missing some of our members, we are going to miss their counsel and advice in these matters and perhaps leave some opinions that the outcome might have been different had these people been here. So I'd like to introduce the idea of delaying that topic and perhaps the meeting until we can get a full board present to discuss these things. So I'll open that up to others.

Kathi Jett: This entire meeting?

Chair Raschko: Well, we could do the other portion of it, but it is fairly limited in scope. We'd be done very quickly. It might be meaningless to do anything at all if we're not going to cover the South Fidalgo topic, in my opinion. Does anybody else have any –

Martha Rose: I have. That only makes sense to me if there's a vast diversity of opinions up here. If we all ended up agreeing, then two more voices wouldn't change that – or three more.

Chair Raschko: Unless there are the voices that might convince everybody –

Ms. Rose: You're right. You're right. That's a good point. All right, thank you.

Kathy Mitchell: Amy, do you have an opinion?

Amy Hughes: I don't have an opinion on it. I look at the people that are here and I wonder if we should carry on. But on the other hand, I think it is a thoughtful statement that needs to be made and if it needs everybody it needs everybody.

Tammy Candler: But is there any guarantee that next meeting there would be a quorum? It might be the same situation, just different people not here.

Ms. Mitchell: It might – it might – we might be in the same boat the next time, whether it was two weeks away or three weeks away. We don't know meeting to meeting. And it would be possible if we got into this long enough that the meeting might be delayed another meeting anyway, and they would not be prevented from piping in then. So this is not the first time we've had a minimal number of people. And I realize this is an important topic but I think you've got – everybody here is pretty capable.

Chair Raschko: So I understand, the consensus seems to be that we go ahead.

Ms. Candler: My thought is I would definitely would want to hear what Josh and Hollie and Annie think before we make our recommendations. I wouldn't mind if we discussed the topics some, but my preference would be that we try to have more of us here.

Chair Raschko: So what does that mean? We go ahead?

Ms. Candler: I seem to be in a minority but...

Ms. Jett: I would like to go ahead, but I don't know how the others feel.

Ms. Rose: I think we should proceed.

Chair Raschko: Okay, how about a show of hands? Who wants to proceed? Is your hand up or down?

Ms. Mitchell: No, it's down.

Chair Raschko: So I have two for and the rest a nay. Do we need a real vote on that for the record?

Ryan Walters: No.

Chair Raschko: No?

Mr. Walters: You have a consensus, or if there's no objection.

Chair Raschko: Okay, and if we're going to postpone that subject for the reasons stated, perhaps they should have their input on the C-2, C-15, C-17, et cetera, as well.

Ms. Jett: I would say so. If you're going to postpone it for one I think you should postpone it for all.

Chair Raschko: All right. So if we do that, should we go ahead with Public Remarks at any rate?

Ms. Mitchell: I've got a question first.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead.

Ms. Mitchell: It's back to not being able to guarantee whether people can show or not. Could we Doodle the meeting then?

Mr. Pernula: That's what I was going to suggest, is that we not set it for a time certain but that we set it for a time when we can get maybe all the members of the Commission, or, if not, all but one or something like that. We can do a Doodle.

Mr. Walters: The next meeting is already scheduled for two weeks from now. So you would be open to some other meeting date?

(sounds of assent)

Chair Raschko: I would.

Mr. Pernula: We could Doodle three or four dates. It may not be on a Tuesday night, either.

Ms. Mitchell: Under these circumstances would other people be willing to do something other than on a Tuesday night, if that's the case?

(sounds of assent)

Ms. Mitchell: Oh, there's Josh. Okay.

Ms. Candler: My preference would be if we could do it on –

Mr. Pernula: We'll try it on Tuesday. We'll try it in two weeks, if we possibly can.

Mr. Walters: Although we do now have seven of the nine.

Ms. Mitchell: Josh is here. We can bring him in on the conversation.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Axthelm, welcome.

Josh Axthelm: Yes. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: We have just had a painful discussion about whether we should cancel tonight's meeting due to a low turnout, and with the subject matter at hand, whether it'd be prudent to have the voices of the other three of you who were not here available. And we had just decided to forego the discussion on the Plan Amendments for tonight, but now that you showed up, what are your feelings?

Mr. Axthelm: Actually I would probably be fine with that.

Chair Raschko: Would you?

Mr. Axthelm: I've been gone for the last couple weeks so I've been pretty busy so I haven't had a chance to go through it as much as I'd like to.

Chair Raschko: So you might be better prepared to boot?

Mr. Axthelm: Yep.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Ms. Mitchell: And the other part of it was to work with the Doodle system so we could make sure that enough people would be there for sure the next time.

Chair Raschko: Okay.

Mr. Walters: When we do a Doodle – which, for the unenlightened, is a software system that checks availability for meetings – when we do that, what is the number of people that you would prefer are available? Nine? All of you?

Chair Raschko: That would be very nice, but eight anyway.

Mr. Walters: Eight or nine?

Chair Raschko: Yeah.

Mr. Walters: Okay.

Chair Raschko: Otherwise we might as well go ahead right now.

Mr. Pernula: We'll do a Doodle and then I'll talk to you and we'll schedule a meeting.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Okay, so having come to a decision on that...still referring to the agenda, do we wish to hear Public Remarks? My own feeling is that there are people here to whom I apologize that might have travelled a long ways and it might be fair to at least listen and let those people have an opportunity to address the Commission if they wish. How do you please?

Female Commissioner: I agree with you.

Ms. Mitchell: I'd say so.

Ms. Jett: Yes.

Mr. Axthelm: But they can't address it on the topic of what we're deliberating on.

Mr. Walters: Correct.

Mr. Pernula: You're right. They cannot address those – this issue.

Mr. Axthelm: But general comments...

Chair Raschko: So moving to Public Remarks, it'd be three minutes. Is anybody – okay.

Carol Ehlers: Carol Ehlers, Fidalgo Island, concerned as usual with facts, making decisions, and the process being honest. Thank you. On the 24th of April, there was in this room a very

unusual experience. The Commissioners from four Counties sat up where you are. The people from the national park sat down here, along with a man named Eric who is from Fish and Wildlife national and who intends clearly to run the entire North Cascades Complex. There's a draft EIS. I think Roger has found more problems with it than any one of us, but I found a whole bunch, starting out with the fact that they don't refer to the national park and the recreation areas. It's mentioned in there, but they refer to it as the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area, and because the whole thing is a wilderness, therefore you can have grizzlies. The fact that there were 905,000 visitors to Ross Lake Recreation Area in 2016 is not something that is mentioned, nor is there real information about bears. And I've got two maps here that we took off the Internet from that presentation.

I encourage all of you – anyone listening to this program – interested at all about process or information or East County to watch that on Skagit 21, April 24th. According to the EIS, grizzlies don't eat fish. According to the EIS, grizzlies don't like the upground, the high mountain area that's wilderness. But this is an area that a Chelan biologist moved to in Montana where the grizzlies are relocated and located naturally, and you can see that they don't spend their time up in the high country but down here. Now you won't find this in the EIS. They use the 1997 research by a man named John Waller who had a radio collar on the bears that you could only see from 7 to 10 in the morning. He did a Ph.D. dissertation in 2005 with radio collars, and what you see is a number of bears who prefer to live in the valley and in town. According to the EIS, the bears have a range of maybe 30, 50 miles at most. This is one bear 155 miles by 175 miles. If you put that over the North Cascades Park and the federally-owned timberland, you get an idea of the real range of an active grizzly. To write an EIS dependent – in 2016 and '17 – dependent on data in '97 which has been completely superseded by a dissertation in 2005 is not the kind of research work that one should use to base a decision like this. So I encourage you to watch. These maps were taken from it.

And just so that you get an idea, this is from the 1988 management plan for the North Cascades Park and the recreation areas. In order to get State Route 20 through those mountains, we were required – the Alpine Club; I was a member – were required to agree to recreation areas, not national park, not wilderness. So you have the Ross Lake one up here and the Lake Chelan one down here. Those are places where you take the kids, where you camp. Now according to this EIS, for the grand tune of – what is it? – 117,000 a year they're going to teach 900,000 visitors plus all the people who live up there – all the fishermen, whether they're freshwater fishermen or anyone else, they're going to train them as to what you do with a grizzly when, of course, if they're endangered – and these will be – you can't shoot. Pay attention to it because if you think as I do that the economy of East County and the other counties is important, and if going up into the high country where you can hike – and I can testify that that trip across Cascade Pass to Lake Chelan is equal to anyplace else I've ever been – the Alps, the Himalaya, anywhere. You're going to get tourists to go look at a grizzly bear on the side of the road where you can't park because the road's too narrow?

Chair Raschko: Thank you.

Ms. Ehlers: I'm not a little bit biased, of course.

Chair Raschko: Would anybody else?

Ed Stauffer: Good evening, Commissioners. Chair Raschko, how's it going? How do you like that gavel?

Chair Raschko: Oh, I love it.

Mr. Stauffer: All right. Just a couple of questions. I've read the meeting agenda. I understand that you are deliberating on the 2017 docket of proposed amendments to the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan. It would help if that would be clarified both as to why it's not called the 2016 docket. That was the deadline of the submittal of these. Your first deliberations and public hearing were in 2016. We're now in the 2017 work program. The 2017 dockets are due by the end – last working day of July, I believe. When we see we're deliberating tonight the 2017 docket, which means those that were docketed from *last* year's submittals, we do have a list provided in the Supplemental Staff Report of what the staff considers to be key documents, but it doesn't say which ones are actually going to be discussed further. The public doesn't know if we need to prepare all of the docketed items or just ones that somehow survived the process of your last public hearing, which was, like, a month ago. I want to point out that the staff Supplemental Staff Report – and I did want to ask the question, Does any member of the Planning Commission know how many staff reports there have been on this issue? This is number which in the sequence? What's been left out? What's been added in this Supplemental Staff Report that wasn't available for the public hearing on the 4th? That's new information. There's at least two letters that were submitted which have new information and points of view. Are we allowed to comment on those tonight or not? Just a couple of questions.

Another item: I was here at the meeting where the Planning Commissioners discussed with you their expectation of you fulfilling a role of being their eyes and ears of the citizens of the Commissioner district in which you reside. To that end, I now hear that not five but eight Planning Commission – Planning *Department* members who announced their intention to leave the Department this year. That's going to leave us with a Planning Department staff in the future that's going to come before you knowing very little about anything that you've deliberated since you sat on the Commission. So it's going to increase the burden on you to be informed about what's going on. At the same time, please be aware that we've had a significant change in the administration and we're already seeing changes in funding sources.

(ringing timer)

Mr. Stauffer: That has impacted your agenda in the past. The changes in the funding sources will impact what we can do in the future. You're called the *Planning* Commission. In order to plan, you're going to have to take that into account and try to anticipate what our needs for planning in the future are going to be, and which ones and what paths we're going to have to follow to meet those. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. John Roozen?

John Roozen: Good evening. My name's John Roozen, and I don't come here that often and I want to first of all thank you for your service. Being the eyes and ears of the people in your districts and the amount of reading and work that you go through to be prepared when you come here is, I'm sure, overwhelming at times and I thank you for that.

But I want – the main thing I wanted to say is I know I can't talk about any of the things that you were going to deliberate on tonight or maybe the next time that I might not be here, is that whether it comes from around you, whether it comes from another county, or whether it comes from staff, you are dealing almost always with powerful agendas from people that are good at presenting staff reports or other reports to promote an agenda. And I'm hoping since you're all – well, I don't know if I should say it this way – big boys and girls, that you think for yourself and

that you recognize those agendas when you vote, and you've talked to the constituents that you represent. I'm from agriculture and there are certain things that you're going to be voting on that are not necessarily good for us in agriculture.

So having said that, I hope you recognize that and you take that very, very seriously because you're the future of some of the things that are going to happen here. I can't say too much. I hope that's clear enough so you can read between the lines and kind of figure out which one I'm talking about. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Would anybody else like to speak?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: If not, then the Department Update.

Mr. Pernula: I think the main thing that I wanted to bring up tonight is two people to my left is Stacy Pratschner. She's our new long range planner, so you'll be seeing a lot of her over the next few years. Stacy has been the last two or three years with the City of Lake Stevens. Sometime before that she was with Whatcom County for about six years. So she has a pretty good base of experience that will help us out a lot and she's going to be the sole long range planner for the Department for the next several years.

Ms. Mitchell: Welcome.

Chair Raschko: Welcome.

Ms. Rose: Yeah.

Stacy Pratschner: Thank you so much. Thank you, Director, for the introduction. Good evening, Commissioners and members of the public this evening. It's my pleasure and privilege to be able to serve this community. I'm so excited for the opportunity. The first two days have been awesome so I'll look forward to us working together over these next few years hopefully doing the good work of the community. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Great. Thank *you*. Anything else?

Mr. Pernula: The only other thing I had to report is we'll do this Doodle as soon as we can and we'll try to get a maximum number of Planning Commission members in attendance so that we can move forward.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Okay, anything the Commissioners wish to share with the rest?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, once again I'd like to apologize to everybody that might have gone way out of their way to make it tonight. As I say, I think the deliberations to come are very important and – I think I could speak for everybody here – we understand that importance and the need to think, you know, beyond what's presented to us and make educated decisions on how we should go forward. So I thank everybody for coming and have a good night. This meeting is adjourned (gavel).