

Clean Energy Advisory Group (CEAG) Meeting Notes

August 7, 2026 from 9-noon

Skagit Public Utility District Aqua Room, 1415 Freeway Drive, Mount Vernon

Purpose: *To provide policy guidance to County staff in drafting a recommended Clean Energy Code. Code amendments will include siting criteria and create a more efficient permitting process for clean-energy projects and will assess impacts, mitigation, identify suitable areas for development and result in predictable permitting for the community and clean energy developers alike.*

Remaining CEAG Meeting Dates (9-noon at Skagit PUD)

Aug. 28; Sept. 11; Oct. 9, 30; Nov. 20 (tentative); Dec. 11 (tentative)

Advisory Group Members Present

Matthew Phillips	Stewards of Skagit (Non-Profit Land Use Group)
Denby Lloyd	Skagit Land Trust (Non-Profit Environmental Group)
Chuck Messenger	United Way Skagit (Non-Profit Vulnerable Communities)
MaryLee Chamberlain	Western County (District 1)
James Karlsgodt	Central County (District 2)
Craig Hansen	Eastern County (District 3)
Emily Hagin	Puget Sound Energy
Ken Huste	Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County
Betty Carteret	Climate Impact Advisory Committee
Steve Wright	Agricultural Advisory Board

Other Attendees

Clay White, Presenter	Kimley-Horn
Anna Lundin, Presenter	Kimley-Horn
Jeanne Aungst	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Robby Eckroth	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lavelle Pilon	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Allen Rozema	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lyn Wiltse, Facilitator, Notetaker	PDSA Consulting, Inc.

Observers

Nancy Shimeall, Terry Sapp, Cole Burgess, Terry Nelson, and Greg Whiting

Action Items

- All Check County website weekly for updates / contact Jeanne with questions.
<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/applicants.htm>
- Robby Email an introduction to the group Jeanne's email as future CEAG communications will be through her. (Done.)

- Jeanne Provide all a zoning use tables (map?) with list of zoning codes and uses. Send a link? Jeanne is in the process of drafting a memo which will include all zoning designations with each of their purposes, use tables and key reference. Memo to be sent out prior to next meeting. Allen will be bringing a full-size zoning map to the next meeting.
- Jeanne Send “Existing Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Ordinances in Washington State (from the organization Clean & Prosperous)” to all. Links to all Ordinances will be emailed to CEAG.
- Jeanne Ensure all of these documents are posted to the County Website, along with any “read-ahead” documents for CEAG meetings.
- Jeanne By Aug. 21 email Kimley Horn presentation, these meeting notes, and Aug. 28 agenda.

Welcome / Introductions

Lyn welcomed all, reviewed the purpose of this group, operating norms, the meeting agenda and action items from the prior meeting.

We were also pleased to welcome Jeanne Aungst to the group. She will be assuming Robby’s duties, and future CEAG email communications will come from her instead of Robby. Due to budgetary constraints in the PDS Department, Robby will be tending to other duties going forward and Jeanne will be stepping into the leadership role of this group.

Jeanne has over 11 years’ experience with Skagit County, starting out as a Permit Technician helping customers navigate the complex web of local, State and federal regulations, then into Development Review, a specialized role within Planning Development Services that helped to ensure the coordination of eight different review teams culminated in the timely issuance of permits. Her current role as an Associate Planner involves reviewing and supporting customers’ development proposals from Building Permits, Land Divisions, Legal Lot Certifications, Boundary Line Adjustments to Special Use Permits, land use zoning approvals and State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) reviews and determinations. Jeanne brings a wide breadth of direct relevant experience to support the Clean Energy Advisory Group’s work in developing recommendations to the Planning Department.

Kimley-Horn Presentation: Code, CEAG Focus, Overview of Uses

(Note: The entire presentation was emailed to CEAG members a week ahead, along with the agenda for this meeting. The presentation has been posted to the County website.)

Clay White and Anna Lundin of Kimley-Horn walked through a very informative slide show covering the following:

- Code development and review processes
 - Benefits to Skagit County including local control of permitting vs. Energy Facility Siting Evaluation Council (EFSEC) process
- Overview of CEAG focus areas

- Zones where uses may be permitted and how the permit process varies depending on the type of application
- Incentives to encourage uses and mitigate impacts
- Application requirements and studies
- Overview of uses being studied as part of this process, along with concerns and associated mitigation measures
 - Solar
 - Solar footprint today is 30% less than before and typical lifespan of panels developed today is 30-40 years. It is estimated that, for some reason, one third of the panels will need to be replaced.
 - Panels produced today are less reflective than bare ground.
 - Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) - often paired with Solar
 - Advantage of prefabricated systems is they are not developed on site.
 - Require a level, high-and-dry site with non-vegetative buffers between BESS site and adjoining property, and compliant with existing fire code.
 - Fusion Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)
 - The County is only considering Fusion SMRs. This involves combining atoms with a heavier atom, which is more stable than the splitting of atoms (Fission SMRs). Requires total vacuum, incredible pressure and high temperatures and bombardment by high-energy particles.
 - Expected to be viable and available commercially within the next 5 years.
 - Note: Fission SMRs are permitted through EFSEC. Fission is more volatile than fusion.
 - Siting considerations and operational concerns
 - Renewable Fuels
 - How they are defined by the State – tricky to regulate because they are often blended with other standard fuels.
 - How they can be transported and options for blending them with other standard fuels
 - The County is particularly interested in renewable fuels.
- Next Steps
 - Focus on key questions and feedback to assist County staff in developing draft code
 - August 28 – Solar and BESS
 - September 11 – Renewable Fuels – will look at existing code and how it works and maybe see opportunities to cross-reference with other sources
 - October 9 – Fusion SMRs

Clay and Anna ended by thanking everyone and saying they look forward to providing additional information at future CEAG meetings. Anna will be joining us in person for our next meeting.

Discussion

- The County goes through a procedural process regarding how they implement the code. It is important to try to minimize the procedural impacts where agencies are under budget limitations.
- If requiring ongoing mitigation, it is important to make sure it is for things that can actually be implemented, monitored and enforced.
- Codes aren't perfect. Uses change over time. We try to hit the "sweet spot" and then adjustments can be made over time.
- The permit process may be different depending on what is included in the application.
- Local control includes what impacts are of concern, what developers should assess, and potential mitigation measures.
- Why aren't fuel cells included in what is being studied? The County conducted research and analysis of what clean energy types are economically viable in Skagit County in addition to consulting with PSE regarding the clean energy types they are considering as part of their regulatory requirements and capacity. Their/the area's needs and future planning were taken into consideration in the selection of what ended up being the four energy types included in today's presentation.
- While the combustion process (air quality) is regulated by the State, the County may be able to write code for processes around the combustion process.
- Will the focus include local jobs and increasing housing? The process will include that focus in accordance with public support for doing so.

Next CEAG Meeting Date/Topics

August 28 from 9-noon at the PUD

Topics to include:

- Review of these meeting notes / Action Items
- Solar & BESS / Group recommendations