

## Clean Energy Advisory Group (CEAG) Meeting Notes

August 28, 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)

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

### Advisory Group Members Present

|                     |                                                       |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Connie Krier        | 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)                           |
| Robert Knoll        | Puget Sound Energy                                    |
| Ken Huste           | Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County        |
| Sarah Young         | Port of Skagit                                        |
| Betty Carteret      | Climate Impact Advisory Committee                     |
| Steve Wright        | Agricultural Advisory Board                           |

### Other Attendees

|                                    |                                                   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Anna Lundin, Zoe Tappert           | Kimley-Horn                                       |
| Jeanne Aungst                      | 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 (CCL Skagit and SV Clean Energy Alliance)

### Action Items

- All Check County website weekly for updates / contact Jeanne with questions.  
<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/applicants.htm>
- All In preparation for the Sept. 11 meeting, review list of ordinances in the binder.  
Think about threshold limits. See example provided by Adams County.
- Jeanne Provide SCC 14.13.100 Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands code section.

- Jeanne Ensure all of these documents are posted to the County Website, along with any “read-ahead” documents for CEAG meetings.
- Jeanne By Sept. 4 email out preparatory meeting materials, these meeting notes, and Sept. 11 agenda.

### **Welcome / Introductions**

Lyn began by reviewing the purpose of this group, operating norms, the meeting agenda and action items from the prior meeting.

Jeanne welcomed everyone and said how Planning and Development Services staff were looking forward to developing clean energy facility siting and mitigation code based on recommendations from this group. On August 20, she emailed the fact sheets prepared by Kimley-Horn, framing questions for today’s discussion, and a memo with zoning designations with uses to CEAG members along with a list of Ordinances, codes, and information related to Clean Energy projects. On August 24, she emailed out an expanded list of Ordinances and codes to include Klickitat and Adams Counties. Per protocols, all have been posted to the County website.

She then called everyone’s attention to the new binders the County provided to Primary CEAG members, to assist with tracking all the information being shared. She described the information behind each tab and encouraged members to review it, so they are all similarly informed on the four clean energy types selected by the County as they pertain to the purpose of this group.

### **Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Discussion: Solar/DERs**

Anna, who attended the last meeting remotely as Kimley-Horn’s clean energy expert, began charting the pros and cons, for solar, noting it can be helpful to think of scale – acreage vs interconnection/rooftop scale. Often 30 acres are required to generate 5 MW. A general guideline today is 4 acres per MW. Robert noted that 5 MW is PSE’s threshold for utility scale solar systems. Zoe took detailed notes as they will be assisting the County in developing the EIS.

Kimley-Horn’s advice is to go forward using output vs. acreage thresholds. This would mean keeping < 5 MW for community scale and 5 MW or greater for utility scale.

What do you see as the Pros of allowing Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) in Skagit County?

- Rooftop and built environment helps to reduce loads.
- Commercial building in front of the meter connecting to the distribution network.
- Solar panels have been around for decades and have a proven record of safety.
- These can be ground mounted.
- It would be an incentive to use a local workforce, thereby supporting the local economy.
- There is an opportunity to maximize all existing buildings on a farm to help the farmers.

- Be sure not to do anything that would result in the conversion of natural resources designated agricultural land (Ag-NRL).
- Keep utility scale development on the menu to meet PSE and industrial needs.
- It would be beneficial to raise the current threshold on residential, light and heavy industrial, and utility-scale.
- Don't limit the amount of energy we can produce in smaller spaces.
- Have multi-tiered system to entice developers.
- Stay flexible knowing the technology is rapidly advancing.
- Solar and battery systems partner well together.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) in Skagit County?

- Skagit Co is limited in its ability to zone for multi-county uses.
- Failing to keep in mind the surrounding environment.
- Not everyone understands that “commercial buildings” include universities, hospitals, etc.
- Potential damage – panel damage during hail storms, winds, water runoff.
- Allowing DERs that are solar would likely require modifying the code in Ag-NRL.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs)?

- Skagit County is a good area for solar. It needs to be part of the clean energy mix.
- Show a preference for existing industrial rooftops.
- Structures with viable rooftops on large farms.
- Many existing commercial buildings (including schools, colleges, hospitals, and service providers) are good options and also well positioned.

Where do you think Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) should be prohibited?

- Consider proximity to the urban areas.
- Ensure adequate setbacks from residential areas. No HVACs should be running right next to people's homes.
- Avoid the 100-yr flood plain (which, perhaps, should be renamed...). Consult with County and Climate Impacts Advisory Committee on details.
- Don't take up space that could have otherwise be used for drainage, wildlife, etc.
- Also avoid critical areas, geologic hazards, alluvial fans, etc.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation? If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

- Setbacks from residential and consideration of glare and direction of panels could mitigate some issues.
- Incentives are preferred over mitigation measures. Offer streamlined permitting and allowed use per zone.
- Show a preference for existing industrial rooftops.
- Prioritize Vocational training and local hiring.
- It could be helpful to look at creating incentives to maximize this use. This would include non-permeable surfaces on large ag buildings in non-residential areas that are viable options.
- Require that revegetation be done with native flora.

### **Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Discussion: BESS**

What do you see as the Pros of allowing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Skagit County?

- Helps us meet our clean energy transition goals. Safety records are good. This is being relied upon in much of the nation.
- PSE needs sources to balance intermittent resources.
- Immediate and reliable.
- Safety – Current worldwide data shows these systems are incredibly safe as installation rate has rapidly increased and incidents of fire has decreased by 99%.
- Expand options at the commercial level.
- Opportunities to maximize industrial and commercial models.
- Offers scalability and different types of cooling systems.
- Can stabilize the battery grid.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Skagit County?

- Battery chemistry (referring to older style Lithium-Ion type batteries).
- Negative public perception.
- Construction noise and high replacement costs of components.
- Better technology is coming out that is less dangerous.
- Environmental concerns if there is a fire.
- Emergency back-up for one of these systems was listed as diesel generators – are they clean?
- Support services is a concern. Our firefighters are all volunteer.
- Drainage and access to water on the site is a concern. Water is used to cool some types of systems.
- Consider the drainage system of the County. If you change the landscape, you change the drainage patterns.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow BESS?

- Small scale on ag land would be okay - Franklin Powerwall particularly to support storage of crops in climate-controlled warehouses.
- Industrial areas – by size, include thresholds.
- Look at substations – siting within 1 mile is key for utility scale systems. Keep it within the transmission network makes a lot of sense.
- Restricted to or adjacent to existing the transmission network for utility scale or distribution network for community or residential scale systems.
- Allow where it could act as emergency operations / community evacuation areas.

Where do you think BESS should be prohibited?

- Anywhere where using well water would be required.
- Out of the flood zone (note new 2-D flood model is available and should be used to evaluate siting).
- Require setbacks in sensitive areas – wildlife, designated green areas, etc.
- Ag NRL – but could allow a 30K KW BESS system on ag industrial site where they already have a lot of heavy traffic, equipment, etc.
- Don't clear lands to create BESS footprints (including forest land).
- Out of open space / viewshed.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation? If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

- Limit the number of containers on a site.
- Establish specific siting requirements based on scale of commercial and utility systems.
- Ensure proper setbacks for residential areas.
- Use newer Lithium Iron Phosphate or Sodium chemistry batteries that have significantly less fire risk.
- Ensure proper drainage for rainwater and containment for any water used for fire suppression.
- Ensure established NFPA 855 fire safety code and other applicable national and international standards are required.

## **Discussion**

- This is all very dependent on the thresholds. Adams County code can be a reference.
- Hybrid Systems: If have thresholds and they are an AND (e.g., solar and BESS).
- There is a disconnect with the technology, the safety record, and the national regulatory code. This impacts thresholds. There is a need for consistency with the County code.

**Next CEAG Meeting Date/Topics**

September 11 from 9-noon at the PUD

Topics to include:

- Review of these meeting notes / Action Items
- Renewable fuels / Group recommendations per the list of standard questions