

AGENDA

Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Planning and Development Services – Northwest Annex

5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Central Conference Room

or

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85943818935?pwd=K2Y0Y2VBRUlPvKkE4WTQvZXRmNytSdz09>

Passcode: cepoc

Friday, January 26, 2024

8:30 – 10:00 AM

1. **Welcome, announcements, public comments, & agenda review (10 minutes)**
2. **Approval of previous meeting minutes (5 minutes)**
3. **Updates since previous meeting (5 minutes)**
4. **Discussion items/business (60 minutes)**
 - Committee Positions
 - Review 2024 Easements
 - 2024 Outreach Plan
5. **Public comments (5 minutes)**
6. **Next meeting (5 minutes)**
 - January 26th, 8:30-10:00 AM- Online and In-Person Option
 - Future agenda items
 - Introduce New Committee Members
 - 2023 Annual Review
 - Business Rules Review

Included in the meeting packet (or provided at the meeting):

- September Meeting Minutes

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are asked to contact the meeting facilitator at least 4 business days in advance. Please contact meeting facilitator, Lauren Templeton, at 360-778-5956 or ltemplet@whatcomcounty.us.

**CEP Oversight Committee
Meeting Summary
September 22, 2023**

Start Time:	8:30 a.m.
Location:	Online Meeting and In-Person at Northwest Annex, 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA

Meeting Highlights
There were 12 people in attendance (4 of the 6 voting members; 2 PDS staff members; 4 Ex-Official; 2 Guests).

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
D’Agnolo, Sean	Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glyzinski, Jen	Real Estate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jones, McKale	Producer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mackay-Brown, Heather	Incorporated, Non-farmer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neely, Burr	Unincorporated, Non-Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Schissler, Paul	Farm Supporting Business	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Producer	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quorum Present	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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PDS Staff	Affiliation	Present
Lauren Templeton	CEP Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Steve Roberge	Assistant Director	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Attendees – Ex-Official/Contributing	Affiliation	Present
Alex Jeffers	WLT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Solvei Metcalf	WLT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hailey Clark	WLT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chris Elder	Whatcom County PW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Attendees – Guests	Affiliation	Present
Alex Chapman	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Corina Cheever	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Determination of a Quorum/ Welcome

We have a Quorum for the meeting starting at 9:07.

Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.

Approval of Minutes – July

Burr moved to approve the meeting minutes. McKale seconded. **The motion passed with Jen, Paul, McKale, and Burr in favor.**

Updates Since Previous Meeting

Lauren provided an update to Savage Easement and the anticipated closing date is middle of October. Lauren mentioned that she participated in the Whatcom Conservation District Farm Funding Event and attended the Preparing for Adjudication presentation and the presentation will be posted on the Whatcom Watershed Information Network website. Jen mentioned that Lauren, Alex (WLT), and Jen had a meeting to discuss the Buy-Protect-Sell process.

Discussion Items/BusinessNew CEP Position

Steve discussed the new CEP position process and said we first need to determine what the position will entail. Steve mentioned due to holidays, we should expect to post the position in mid-January. Lauren asked what the anticipated hiring process timeline is. Steve said you can expect someone to start the position within 2 – 3 months of posting the position. Burr clarified that we should expect a mid-March start date.

Jen asked for Steve's feedback on what he thinks the position should include. Steve said they had previously discussed a position for outreach and someone who is detail-oriented. Chris agrees. Steve asks CEPOC to review the job description and see where we are missing support. Burr asked how the County can provide additional support and Steve said he hopes there is capacity for administrative support.

Paul asked if we can post the position in mid-November so we can have someone in the position by January. Steve said he would look into it but it is difficult to start the hiring process before the budget is available. Jen said we should try to have a job description completed by November in case we can post it before the budget is

available. Jen asked if anyone on the committee would volunteer to help with the description. McKale and Paul volunteered. Chris also volunteered as he has insight from when the position had two staff.

Paul also asked what level planner the job would be. Steve said it is budgeted as a Planner I or II. Steve also mentioned there will likely be a two-part interview, where a couple of CEPOC members could be involved.

Coordinated Land Management Meeting

Lauren attended the Coordinated Land Management Meeting with Public Works and Parks. Lauren shared that they are working on compiling all County-owned properties. Lauren is developing a GIS attribute list for the existing CEP easements to help with tracking and reviewing CEP projects, but the dataset could also be shared among departments. Chris shared that the current coordination focus is building a dataset of all County properties to then determine how it will benefit across departments.

Jen asked if the coordination is within the County or if it includes coordination with the cities as well. Jen mentioned that she was involved with the acquisition with the City of Bellingham and the City was able to cover purchase costs through the Greenways Levy. Chris said the goal will be to include cities and other agencies in the future.

Buy-Protect-Sell

Alex describes two primary goals of the Buy-Protect-Sell strategy that differ from the standard easement process: farmland affordability and farmland succession. Farmland succession could include larger farms and would be beneficial for farmland protection, but smaller parcels will likely be more beneficial to beginning farmers.

Paul asked if we could ask landowners to sign a right of first refusal. Alex said that could be a good option for applicants to have the option to sign a right of first refusal. Jen said she did not think there was a cost associated with a right of first refusal document.

Jen mentioned another benefit to buy-protect-sell is being able to buy the property at fair market value. Paul said a buy-and-lease-back program could be another option. Jen said this has been discussed and she has experience with the lease option to purchase to receive additional funding. Chris also mentioned selling an easement with a right of first refusal to purchase at 90 percent through Washington Farmland Trust, so that it can be sold to another farmer at a reduced rate. Alex asked if this was an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value and Chris said it was not.

Lauren shares an example criterion for an applicant and Jen asks for comments from the committee on additional criteria. Lauren mentioned including a Whatcom County resident or having farm experience in Whatcom County. Chris says utilizing the Tilth

Alliance farmlink or WFT Farm to Farmer could be beneficial and Lauren mentions WFT has offered support in the application process to Alex and Lauren. Jen mentioned we may be able to use information from farmer's funding applications to reduce repetition and provide information for eligibility.

Burr asked if it is more effective to focus on a leasing strategy than a buying strategy. Chris said both leasing and buying would be good options but the long-term goal for more farmers is to own land. Burr mentioned a leasing program may be more beneficial with the reality of land costs. Alex said farmland leasing will require more staff capacity which may be difficult currently but can be explored more, including 99-year lease options.

Jen said that the buy-protect-sell program will be giving preference to beginning farmers and smaller farms, but we do not want to discount large farmers. The program will still be in alignment with our current guidelines but will provide additional options. Lauren said she would prepare draft criteria to be discussed at the next meeting.

Committee Meeting Time

Lauren asked if the current meeting time still was preferred by the committee or if they would prefer to meet outside of regular work hours. Those present said the current time is still preferred. Jen recommended reassessing during the recruitment of new committee members.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Future Agenda Items

- Alex Jeffers Buy-Protect-Sell Example Presentation
- Buy-Protect-Sell Draft Criteria Review
- Job Description Review
- Review of Current Applicants and Outreach

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, October 27, 2023, 8:30-10:00 AM. This will be a hybrid meeting with an in-person and remote option.

Meeting adjourned at 9:53 AM.