

AGENDA

Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Planning and Development Services – Northwest Annex

5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Annex Conference Room

or

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83517926824?pwd=SnVUOVRKbVBQekdrUnVzNDIySTJQZz09>

Passcode: cepoc

Friday, June 24, 2022

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)**
 - Whatcom Food System Plan
 - Whatcom County Staff Coordination
 - Direction for Acquisition Strategy
5. **Public comments (5 minutes)**
6. **Next meeting (5 minutes)**
 - July 22nd, 8:30-10:00 AM- Online and In-Person Option
 - Future agenda items
 - Meeting with County Executive
 - Program Acquisition Update

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

- May 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, Becky Snijder van Wissenkerke, at 360-778-5956 or rsnijder@whatcomcounty.us.

Determination of a Quorum/ Welcome

We have a Quorum for the meeting.

Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.

Approval of Minutes – April

Heather suggested an edit to the April meeting minutes. Burr moved to approve the meeting minutes. Jeff seconded. **The motion passed with all in favor.**

Discussion Items/BusinessStaffing Request

The committee discussed past requests to increase staff time dedicated to the Conservation Easement Program. Past requests were for 1.5 FTE, which was approved in 2012, but then staff time was later redistributed, resulting in a reduction to 0.5 FTE for the program. Current staff time allotted for the program is 0.75 FTE. Suggestion for a future staffing request included increasing current staff to 1.0 FTE, contracting with the Whatcom Conservation District for outreach support, and requesting additional staff to support the CEP as well as other County programs. Jeff moved for the CEPOC to meet with the Executive's Office to discuss additional staff support. Heather seconded. **The motion passed with all in favor.** Paul and Heather will arrange a meeting with the County Executive.

The committee also discussed reaching out to the Climate Impact Advisory Committee for support.

Program Funding

Becky announced King County's proposal to increase their Conservation Futures levy rate. Paul inquired if voter approval is required to increase Whatcom County Conservation Futures or if County Council could approve. The committee also inquired about other county's levy rates, including Skagit County. Becky will look up additional information. Paul also recapped the Real Estate Excise Tax 3 and its potential to fund the program if it were instated.

Becky stated that Whatcom County would need to develop a plan of proposed uses before requesting an increase to local funding. The committee stated that the current priority is to increase staffing, then look into a funding increase. Jeff stated that it is helpful to know what other County programs or departments may also be asking for additional funding. Heather stated it would be helpful to know conservation easement expenditures for the next 5-10 years and requested that County staff coordinate projected expenditures. The committee discussed the need to develop a county coordinated strategy and target priorities vs. general outreach and service to all landowners. Alex shared that the Whatcom Land Trust balances targeted outreach with volunteer landowners reaching out.

Future Agenda Items

- Whatcom Food System Plan
- Staff Coordination
- Direction for Acquisition Strategy

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, June 24, 2022, 8:30-10:00 AM. This will be a hybrid meeting with an in-person and remote option.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 AM.