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**To:** [PDS Planning Commission](#); [Council](#); [Barry Buchanan](#); [Todd Donovan](#); [Satpal Sidhu](#); [Carol Frazey](#); [Rud Browne](#); [Barbara Brenner](#); [Tyler Byrd](#)  
**Subject:** Calling for ensuring safety for community members regarding public meetings  
**Date:** Thursday, September 26, 2019 4:58:06 PM

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Dear Whatcom County Planning Commission and Whatcom County Council:

I am writing in regard to the September 12, 2019 Town Hall that was focused on the Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan and code amendments.

I am calling on you officials to do everything you can to help ensure that a safe atmosphere is provided at all subsequent meetings regarding this high profile topic, and, of course, at any of your meetings.

In listening to the first couple hours of the September 12 town hall meeting recording, so far, and hearing accounts from people who attended, I was able to understand that some audience members persistently applauded nearly all public commenters who were opponents to the Cherry Point amendments. In the first two hours of the meeting I only heard two alerts advising community members not to applaud, coming from someone whom I assume was the Whatcom County Planning Commission chair, although I did not hear them identify themselves. I cannot find any information on who the current Planning Commission chair is on the Whatcom County website, other than in the only minutes published for this year for the Planning Commission (January 24, 2019) when the chair at that time was Nicole Oliver. The person who had given the alerts against applause was a male.

In addition to the persistent applause, there were a couple commenters during those first two hours whose remarks were laughed at. One instance of the laughter at a commenter was offered in a derisive way. The only addressing of the issue of laughter from Commission Members that I heard was a remark advising against laughter because it would prolong the meeting.

My understanding from attending and listening to public meetings is that during public comment, community members are meant to be assured of a safe environment where neither applause nor heckling can serve to threaten or impede the candid sharing of information and opinions.

I would hope that in upcoming meetings where public comment on this subject is allowed, that you all would have trained peace keeper volunteers at hand. Officials can then let community members know that their safety and participation is prioritized and that, should there be applause or heckling, peace keepers are there to assist in reminding individuals such actions are not permitted and that people will be asked

to leave who are not adhering to stated rules aimed at providing a safe atmosphere for those at the gathering.

Additionally, I am aware that an individual attending the September 12 town hall had sent an email to County Council Members relating their negative experiences at the Town Hall with regard to the applause and actions of one person wearing Phillips 66 attire. It is my understanding from this individual that they were subsequently sent an email from a Phillips 66 spokesperson, stating, in part, "I have been made aware of your September 13th email to the Whatcom Council regarding the Planning Commission public meeting on September 12." This individual is now very concerned as to whether their personal contact information and their identity was provided to someone at Phillips 66 by an elected official, without being asked if they would want their complaint to be forwarded to them.

While it's my understanding that it is not against any rules for government officials to share such information, I believe it is very important for officials to be sensitive to the safety and sense of safety which is important for all community members to have. Many community members are not aware that information sent in to elected officials, in becoming part of the public record, may become available to various other people than those to whom it was sent. I believe that it would not be prohibitive for officials to contact community members and ask their permission, before forwarding on their communications with their contact information, regarding sensitive subjects to which private organizations or other civilians might retaliate in some form, or for which individuals might fear there would be potential retaliation. In other words, I understand this would be a courtesy. But I believe this courtesy should be observed in order to promote constructive and safe interactions.

During these times when certain types of violence against community members has been encouraged by our current President, it is especially important that we be watching out for each other's safety. I look forward to you all taking measures to do all that you can to ensure a safe, non-intimidating environment for all of our community members interacting with you, going forward.

Sincerely,  
Dena Jensen  
Birch Bay, WA

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