



August 12, 2020

Whatcom County Planning Commission  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98225

RE: Planning Commission, August 13<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing – Cherry Point Amendments

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to thank you for your transparent review of the proposed amendments to the Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan and County Code. You have done some good work and made some important recommendations. I appreciate the collaborative process the Planning Commission has brought to your review process and I ask that you support the Joint Industry/ RE Sources Proposal that you requested.

I am the COO of a company that does work out at Cherry Point. I have always had serious concerns about the County Council’s proposed Cherry Point amendments even prior to COVID 19. Now those concerns are magnified as we all try to navigate the resulting economic impact of the pandemic. I opposed the Council’s original version sent to you for review and your recommendation are a significant improvement, but my concerns remain.

Companies currently at Cherry Point are operating both safely and proficiently, and to the benefit of our community that has relied on this industrial zone for good family wage jobs for nearly 50 years. There are currently more than 3,300 family wage jobs connected to the companies operating at Cherry Point that have an average salary of nearly \$111,000 per year – significantly more than the County average. Additionally, the activity in this long-time industrial zone alone have provided more than \$200 million in annual tax revenues in addition to the more than \$1 million donated by these companies in 2018 to some of the most essential charities in our community such as the United Way, Bellingham Schools Foundation, and the Boys & Girls Club of Whatcom County.

Whatcom County policy makers must consider these changes in the context of the pandemic economy. Whatever changes are made to regulations impacting industries at Cherry Point we must be absolutely sure they are necessary and not driving away the living wage jobs our community needs.

As members of the Planning Commission, you have a responsibility to represent the hard-working families of the region and doing what is best for future generations. Please finish your review and work with industry and adopt the recommendations in the Joint Proposal. We all must work together grow our economy in Whatcom County.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments on this important matter.

Best,

Bill VanZanten  
CEO/Owner  
Western Refinery Services

Ryan Likkell  
COO/Owner  
Western Refinery Services