

August 13, 2020

Whatcom County Planning Commission
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Commissioners:

As a Business Agent for Laborers local 292 I represent over 1,400 men and women many of whom work out at the Cherry Point refineries. These comments are to be considered for your August 13 public hearing on the Cherry Point amendments.

I would like to thank the Planning Commission for the many constructive recommendations the Commission has made to the County Council's Cherry Point amendments. I also appreciate the Commission's transparent process and that you have encourage stakeholders to come together to solve some of the remaining issues. I urge the Commission to support the resulting Joint Industry/ RE Sources Proposal that is included in the meeting materials for your August 13 public hearing.

As always, in Washington this type of decision making is met with strong rhetoric from both sides of the issue, but in this case, it is important that we must look at the facts and the reality of our community and the current state of our economy.. The activity at the roughly 7,000-acre Chery Point Industrial Zone is an integral part of the economy, quality of life, and future of Whatcom County. Therefore, it is imperative that we find a balance between the industrial area's economic importance and the environmental interests.

The changes to the Comprehensive Plan that Council is trying to push through would likely discourage future investment that will result in a loss of local jobs and tax revenue that otherwise would be invested in the community. The application of conditional use permitting creates a discretionary process that will deter and disincentivize investment. Why would a company pick a location where the regulators are not limited to any rules, or conformity to applicable ordinances or standards?

This is unfortunate because Cherry Point operations support some of the area's highest-paying jobs and we would be doing a great disservice to our state and the families that live here today and for years to come if we cut off the opportunity for more business growth here.

Finally, the COVID 19 crisis has severely impacted our economy in many negative ways that we are just starting to understand. When making such dramatic regulatory changes to major job creators at this time in history we need to make sure we are very careful not to drive jobs out of the County.

To me one thing is clear, Cherry Point will continue to be a community supported by industrial work. The choice is up to us as to whether it's a community that's thriving with ample economic opportunity or simply surviving. Please finish your good work and continue to give a thorough review of the remaining issues in the Cherry Point amendments before you send your recommendations along to Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Rod Roth
Business Agent
Laborer Local 292