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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Special County Council

May 16, 2006

Council Chair Laurie Caskey-Schreiber called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in the Whatcom County Civic Center Annex, Second Floor Meeting Room, 322 N. Commercial, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

Barbara Brenner
Dan McShane
Seth Fleetwood
Carl Weimer

Absent:

L. Ward Nelson
Sam Crawford

1. **APPROVAL OF MOTION TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT AUTHORIZED PREVIOUSLY FOR THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO EXECUTE EASEMENTS WITH PROPERTY OWNERS INVOLVED IN THE BERTRAND CREEK LEVEE SETBACK PROJECT, AS LONG AS THE TOTAL COMPENSATION AMOUNT DOES NOT EXCEED THE REVISED TOTAL AMOUNT DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION (AB2006-224)**

McShane moved to increase the amount authorized previously for the County Executive to execute easements with the property owners involved in the Bertrand Creek Levee Setback Project, as long as the total compensation amount does not exceed the revised total amount discussed in executive session.

Motion carried 4-0 with Brenner, Crawford, and Nelson absent.

2. **WORK SESSION ON SCOPING A WORK PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE/RESOURCE LAND ISSUES (AB2006-203)**

Hal Hart, Planning and Development Services Director, stated staff was tasked with working with the Council to create a scope for a program. He introduced staff.

Troy Holbrook, Planning and Development Services Department, stated this started with the Comprehensive Plan docket process. They hope today to determine the breadth and depth of an integrated resource program. Staff needs direction from the Council.

Today, staff hopes to get answers to the definition of the scope, process, timeline, and outcomes. He submitted a handout of the draft scoping proposal (*on file*).

Brenner asked if this program will deal with agriculture. Holbrook stated they can start with agriculture and then expand, depending on direction from the Council.

Brenner asked if they are talking about dealing with other resources in addition to agriculture. Holbrook stated it depends if the Council wants to expand to mineral lands, forest lands, and other resource lands.

McShane stated define what they are doing already, then define what else they need to do, and then prioritize. Staff is looking for direction on just how big or small and how focused they want to be.

1
2 Holbrook stated the direction from Council to staff so far is to make programs more
3 integrated. Combine programs to get the maximum benefit from all the programs.
4

5 Kraig Olason, Planning and Development Services, stated the scope is divided into
6 three areas. The first area is clearly agricultural. The second area is integration.
7 Integration is about items that are underway or complimentary to an agricultural program.
8 The third area is the non-agricultural portion of rural. Today, the staff needs to know from
9 the Council if and how to deal with the non-agricultural rural area. Staff looked at
10 agriculture as a resource base that has additional acreage that is not zoned agriculture, but
11 is in the rural areas. If they consider the acreage they are concerned about protecting
12 within rural and added additional protections, the question is whether the Council wants to
13 look at non-agriculture issues, such as open space and forestry. The agriculture designation
14 is based on soils and the agriculture/open space taxation designation. It is not based on
15 actual use. They are not talking about zoned forestry land.
16

17 He read the list of methods and activities in the Protect/Preserve section of the
18 handout. The first few methods and activities were gleaned from the Comprehensive Plan
19 amendment applications that the Council approved. The original discussion did not include
20 economic development. If they are going to have an agricultural program that is complete,
21 economic development will have to be a component. They are considering a scoping
22 process to include review of these kinds of things and additional things they want to
23 incorporate into the process of developing proposals. He continued to read the list of
24 methods and activities. If there are additional things to consider, the Council can add those
25 things.
26

27 When they talked about the agriculture program, they talked about integration of
28 programs. The conservation planning on agriculture lands (CPAL) process is a big part of
29 the critical areas ordinance discussions. He read the list of methods and activities for the
30 integration phase. The Comprehensive Plan talks a lot about education. There could be
31 workshops associated with CPAL, for example. He receives calls all the time from people
32 with questions about managing their properties. That would integrate into the program.
33 Part of this holistic program has to address water rights in some form, even if the County
34 has a limited role. Water resource inventory area (WRIA) implementation may have a
35 direct bearing on an agriculture program.
36

37 Brenner stated she keeps hearing from farmers about all the regulations they have
38 to follow. There must be some way to work better with the farmers on implementing
39 regulations. Also, small farms should have fewer regulations than big farms, or maybe
40 different regulations. Those are the two things she hears about the most often. Olason
41 stated CPAL may be able to address that concern to some extent.
42

43 Caskey-Schreiber stated a lot of it is mandated by the critical areas ordinance. The
44 Council has to take responsibility for the County's regulations on farmers.
45

46 Fleetwood asked if they would prioritize the items on the list. He asked staff's next
47 step. Olason stated the idea is to start with a working list, then staff would come up with
48 options for the Council to consider. It may take additional research.
49

50 For agriculture now, the County has a purchase of development rights (PDR)
51 program, works with the Agriculture Advisory Committee on code issues, does not do much
52 with economic development, has the dairy nutrient management ordinance with
53 enforcement, has the CPAL program and the critical areas ordinance, and is working more

1 closely with the Conservation District to implement that program. The CPAL program will
2 also be associated with the shoreline ordinance. There is the right-to-farm ordinance. They
3 don't do a lot with education. They haven't started implementing WRIA. They have worked
4 with zoning a bit. They have updated the Comprehensive Plan. They are working with a
5 mitigation ordinance for conversion of agriculture. They have done a number of code
6 changes over the years. Historically, the Planning Department's role has been one of
7 traditional program planning. They work with agriculture on the zoning ordinance.
8

9 Fleetwood asked if the primary technique of mitigation conversion would be transfers
10 of development rights (TDR). Olason stated mitigation would be from a mitigation
11 payment, TDR, or purchase of development rights (PDR).
12

13 Brenner stated she's heard that the TDR program is not working. Olason stated it
14 can work in some circumstances, but not all. They have to do careful review of the program
15 proposal to see if it's working.
16

17 Hart stated staff time and effort has been spent only on TDR's in the Lake Whatcom
18 watershed. Staff has to do the same effort or more to see how TDR's will benefit
19 agriculture. It will take a while to get it up and running.
20

21 Holbrook stated a TDR program for agriculture would be completely different from
22 the Lake Whatcom TDR program. Land values are completely different.
23

24 Caskey-Schreiber stated the County has not set up a program to motivate people to
25 use the TDR program.
26

27 Brenner stated she is interested in exploring the mitigation bank option. Holbrook
28 stated he would do an update on Lake Whatcom TDR's. In the last three years, there have
29 been over 60 transfers. The program is stalled now due to receiving issues with
30 Bellingham.
31

32 McShane stated it's important to at least think about the non-agriculture rural items.
33 Olason stated they have talked about open space as associated with UGA's, habitat needs
34 due to Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance, and how it relates to rural forestry
35 woodlands. On the docket is the cluster ordinance. It deals with rural forestry, rural, and
36 agriculture. It looks at the benefit of identifying clusters based on the underlying value of
37 the property. Staff is looking at going beyond the agriculture program to deal with an open
38 space program to retain some rural character.
39

40 On the list is an effort to deal with forestry that is similar to CPAL. It would be like a
41 forestry plan to ensure an effort to assist small landowners to manage their woodlands.
42

43 Brenner stated that when someone gets an open space/forestry designation, they
44 have to do a forestry plan. Olason stated the effort would include more detail than a farm
45 forestry plan. The County could have regular training to help people working with forestry.
46 He read the list of methods and activities for the non-agriculture rural phase.
47

48 Hart stated the Council will have a discussion on bringing forward tree retention in
49 Birch Bay. The community wants it for aesthetic reasons in addition to environmental
50 reasons.
51

52 McShane stated in terms of stream protection and stormwater, it is well documented
53 that communities have tried to protect streams by maintaining rural zoning. However, it

1 has been found that in Western Washington, zoning alone has not protected those streams.
2 It varies depending on the soils. The amount of runoff increase from an area where the
3 evergreen canopy was removed is 30 to 35 percent. There is still an increased flow of
4 runoff even if hardwoods are present. Think about tree retention in more environmentally
5 sensitive watersheds.

6
7 Brenner asked if there are other non-County programs that the County is involved
8 with, such as the Trees for Streams program. Olason stated he's not aware of any
9 programs the County is involved in.

10
11 Olason continued to read the list of methods and activities for non-agriculture rural.

12
13 Hart stated in 20 years, transportation will be a huge issue, in terms of competition
14 for cheap ground for mitigation. From the viewpoint of Public Works, every road project
15 also must deal with stormwater. Therefore, they will look for additional ground and wetland
16 mitigation.

17
18 Holbrook stated the tiered contribution for urban growth area (UGA) and the
19 TDR/PDR requirement is a concept they are considering as growth occurs and there's a
20 demand for UGA's to expand. The question is how to incorporate the TDR and PDR
21 programs in areas other than the Lake Whatcom watershed. There are many issues they'd
22 have to research if they go down that path.

23
24 Caskey-Schreiber asked about converting long-term planning areas to short-term
25 planning areas in the UGA's. She asked if the County has the right to demand TDR's for
26 that kind of thing. Holbrook stated it is unclear. It is questionable if the property is already
27 zoned agriculture, and the regulations require preservation of agriculture.

28
29 Hart stated a there is a national problem with agriculture in proximity to urban
30 areas. A key factor in the land evaluation site assessment (LESA) process is the distance
31 from a city or urban growth area. If the County has a functioning PDR program in the
32 future, and if a city makes a large jump in a direction that is an agricultural area, then the
33 expectations of the agricultural community for an acre of ground would increase
34 dramatically. The County would never be able to make up the difference between the newly
35 expected value. That could extend for several miles. The closer they are, the bigger the
36 impact on the County's ability to protect those agriculture lands over time.

37
38 Olason stated one technique is to have agriculture mitigation for designated resource
39 lands. When agriculture lands are taken out for another use, there is an ability to come up
40 with some sort of replacement cost. Provide some mitigation for the loss of that land in
41 another area that may not be as well protected. A program shouldn't protect land that is
42 already protected.

43
44 Brenner stated they may decide they want to protect streams, and then those areas
45 will be annexed into a city in the future. She asked if the County could require certain
46 conditions as part of the interlocal agreement. Olason stated that can be discussed during
47 the annexation phase. When looking at UGA's, consider how well they protect into the
48 future is important. Easements would be more enforceable than County regulations.
49 Easements run with the land.

50
51 Brenner stated she doesn't understand the view-shed. Olason stated view-shed
52 requirements limit activities that impede a view. Identify key view-sheds they want to
53 preserve.

1
2 Brenner asked if they are talking about protecting views from manmade things.
3

4 McShane stated the views for people in the lowland would be the hills. People really
5 value view-sheds. It impacts people's impressions of Bellingham and Whatcom County.
6

7 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*
8

9 McShane continued to state that this issue came up during the Parks planning
10 process in terms of people's perceptions while driving along transportation corridors. Those
11 issues are important to people.
12

13 Fleetwood asked if they will prioritize those things they want to concentrate on. He
14 asked if they would reduce their ideas to implementation through ordinances, and
15 implement the plan from this, or create a suite of options to be reviewed and implemented
16 at the same time. Olason referenced a handout of the proposed scoping organizational
17 chart (*on file*) and stated that is up to the Council. Focus on things that will provide a
18 quicker response and better benefit. The scoping process will determine what they want to
19 focus on. This is a suggested process that has more public process than they talked about
20 originally. It was discussed that the County Council would work through the Natural
21 Resource Committee, which would get feedback from citizen committees. The process
22 would get information to the Council early on about what the public wants. Consider having
23 people with expertise on a technical advisory committee.
24

25 Brenner stated include representation from the granges. Olason stated the Council
26 could also get input from others. He read the list of potential representatives on a technical
27 advisory committee.
28

29 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the technical advisory committee would be charged with
30 figuring out how to protect or enhance the agricultural base. Olason stated they would go
31 through the list and do analysis and review. Staff would work out assignments for the
32 committee to consider. The committee would give some practical feedback about these
33 possibilities.
34

35 Caskey-Schreiber stated give a technical advisory committee focused direction so it
36 doesn't get bogged down in the politics. Hart stated staff can suggest more focused topics
37 for each item.
38

39 Olason stated the Natural Resource Committee could fine tune the direction for the
40 committees, through the staff.
41

42 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the TDR program includes mitigation and banking. Hart
43 stated it does if the Council puts it on the list. Staff would look for an existing model for a
44 successful agricultural-focused TDR program. Before giving direction to any committee,
45 continue to refine the policy choices made today.
46

47 Brenner stated the direction should come from the full Council, not just the Natural
48 Resources Committee. The Natural Resources Committee should bring recommendations to
49 the full Council.
50

51 Fleetwood asked if the four- to six-month schedule is just for scoping. He asked if
52 the agricultural program is one single project with a timeframe, or if they are envisioning a
53 long-term program. Olason stated the components of what comes out of the scoping

1 process fit into the timeline. Try to get more upfront feedback from the community to the
2 Council to make sure they're moving in the right direction. The timeline also depends on
3 the budget requirements, the options the Council includes, and the detail. The Council can
4 choose only a few of the suite of options or choose to be much broader. Staff is looking for
5 assistance to help work through scoping, getting the feedback from the public to the
6 Council, and will develop options for the budget cycle.
7

8 McShane stated the Natural Resources Committee would steer and coordinate
9 meetings with the full Council to make sure the entire Council is involved. That's what's
10 been happening so far. The Natural Resources Committee won't determine priority and
11 leave out the full Council.
12

13 Brenner stated she would rather stick to agriculture-related stuff. People will go in
14 many directions, otherwise.
15

16 Caskey-Schreiber stated she agrees. Initially, they are trying to go after the rural
17 character issue and the rural, one unit per five acres (R5A) zones and protect the
18 agricultural base. Otherwise, the Council may not get from the advisory committees what it
19 expects.
20

21 Olason stated the concept of early-on scoping is to get clarity. This is a good
22 process, but don't get too big and vague. Think about what the Council wants to
23 accomplish before tasking the committees.
24

25 Fleetwood stated he agrees, but it makes sense to characterize this effort broadly.
26 They can limit and create the expectation based on the Council's direction. The Council can
27 emphasize agricultural preservation if it so chooses. The original motivation for this process
28 was his and Councilmember McShane's applications to amend the Comprehensive Plan and
29 consider downzones in some rural and agricultural areas. Since then, it morphed into a
30 larger idea about natural resource preservation in Whatcom County. Natural resource
31 amenities are broader than agriculture and rural. Characterize this as a natural resource
32 protection program, not just for agriculture and rural.
33

34 McShane stated the Natural Resources Committee wanted to go through what
35 they're doing and other possibilities and consider priorities. The committee also wanted to
36 discuss this with some stakeholders. The councilmembers have some ideas on where they
37 want to go. He wants to consider forestry land also. Think about the agricultural overlay in
38 a different way. There may be value to the soils that were left out. Think about them
39 differently. The next step is to bring in stakeholders. The stakeholders need to go through
40 this same exercise and know what's going on. He's confident that's the direction the
41 community wants to go. The question is how to do that in a way that is fair and works.
42 Time is of the essence. Engage the community to make sure they know the Council's
43 direction and to help the Council find its direction. This is an effort to try and get
44 implementation going. The next step is to indicate the Council's priorities and talk about
45 who they want to bring in and how. Don't get too big and cumbersome in the process.
46 There has been a lot of process already, through the Comprehensive Plan process in 1997.
47 A lot of that language will stay the same. There has also been a lot of process through
48 elections. People in the county are really worried about the natural resource base in the
49 county. It's what makes Whatcom County special.
50

51 Brenner stated the people who are most directly affected are who the County needs
52 to start with. The Council must work toward creating incentives. An expert in planning said
53 they need to do this in baby-steps. The County must work with people. Everyone has a

1 different image of rural character. Don't legislate taste. Work with the people who are
2 affected. The people can come up with great ideas. Once that's done, open it up to the
3 general public, one resource at a time. Start with agriculture. When that is done, do the
4 other resources. Otherwise, the Council will go in too many directions at the same time.
5

6 Fleetwood asked if the steps are as follows: first implement these committees, which
7 would help with public feedback, which would help with scope, which would determine if
8 work is done in-house or via a consultant, which would inform the budget, which would lead
9 to implementation. Olason stated they have not discussed outcomes. Have some feedback
10 to let people, particularly the farming community, know about the process. Look at the
11 Council's priorities versus the community's priorities. Then include more detail in the
12 prioritization for the program direction. These committees would develop options. The
13 outcome may be a tiered timeline. They could work on agriculture first, and continue the
14 process later. That could go into the budget cycle with the idea this process will take a
15 certain amount of time. That may be more structured and successful than having a huge
16 process that goes on forever.
17

18 Dennis Rhodes, Planning and Development, stated this is similar to the State
19 Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, with different alternatives the Council and public
20 can choose from. The Council can mix and match alternatives depending on budget and
21 timeline. The timeline is getting public input to smooth the questions from staff. Meeting
22 with the industry and public will fine-tune the questions and priorities, which will set up the
23 options. That will allow them to attach funding and staffing requirements. Staff will bring
24 this to the Council through the budget cycle for next year.
25

26 Henry Bierlink, Agriculture Preservation Committee, stated he is comfortable with the
27 scope. The focus has to be the land. That's the issue. Determine what is the County's land
28 use authority and how to make it fit for the natural resource sector of the county. Many
29 things can be done, but aren't. Focus the scope and don't make it so broad that it never
30 gets off the ground. Land is the issue. The land use authority of the County can't be
31 overlooked. Don't limit the topic to just agriculture.
32

33 Chuck Antholt, citizen, stated he agrees with Mr. Bierlink. They can do something
34 about land here. Regarding the scoping process, of the three committees proposed, all of
35 those components already exist in the Agriculture Advisory Committee, including the
36 granges. The one exception is a representative from other industries. Regarding economic
37 development, that's the issue. It's much larger than just land. However, he is not sure how
38 far they want to go at this time. They may have to pass up that issue at this time.
39

40 John Belisle, citizen, stated he agrees that land is the issue. Farms and farmers
41 have changed throughout the history, but the common thread is the land. They are close to
42 not having land anymore. Forestry is in the same situation. If farmers have certainty in the
43 land, they will figure out a way to make money. It is the same with forestry. Preserving
44 the land is necessary to saving farming and forestry.
45

46 George Boggs, Conservation District, stated the Conservation District Board thinks its
47 important that farmland is protected. The Board is delighted that the Council is addressing
48 this issue. Regarding integration with CPAL, there is a great deal of work together to put
49 the materials together. There is some funding from the County to assist. They are not
50 going to wait until next year's budgeting (*inaudible*).
51

52 McShane stated that commitment was made through the critical areas ordinance
53 process and will end up in the shoreline process. The Council has options for assisting the

1 Conservation District and making sure that happens. There are options besides giving them
2 money. Boggs stated (*inaudible*). He explained the CPAL program. There are three levels
3 of impacts. He explained the three levels of impacts and the history and status of the self-
4 checklist for self-assessment. This is intuitive for hobby farmers. There will be workshops
5 for farms with a moderate level of impact. A successful CPAL program requires a checklist
6 appropriate for small and medium impact farms, workshops for better stewardship, and
7 boot camps for those who scoff laws. The program also tracks farm plans, which are
8 County-administered. The tribes and environmental groups expect some accountability.
9 They haven't decided yet how to track compliance and participation and measure success.
10 There is a lot left to do.

11
12 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the State did not allocate any funds for the Conservation
13 District to implement the critical areas ordinance and CPAL. Boggs stated the State did not.
14 The Conservation District even lost funding. The district is down to one livestock planner.
15 There are no resources. He's talked to the State legislature about this.

16
17 Caskey-Schreiber stated there are issues with which the Council should help the
18 Conservation District. Have a meeting or recommendation around budget time. Boggs
19 stated the discussion has to happen somehow. This is the County's program. Right now,
20 it's not an option for a significant portion of the population who want to comply. The
21 Council needs to direct the Executive to implement the program as drafted.

22
23 Weimer stated the CPAL program and Conservation District needs to be considered.
24 The administration could bring up a supplemental budget this year. He would support it.

25
26 (*Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.*)
27

28 Weimer continued to state that they must first consider the top three
29 methods/activities in the "protect/preserve rural and agriculture resource land base" area of
30 the handout. Everything is less of a priority.

31
32 Dewey Desler, Deputy Administrator, stated County Council at its next meeting will
33 hear about a proposal from administration to create a fund for the CPAL program, in the
34 amount of \$45,000.

35
36 Boggs stated that the development and implementation of a CPAL program is not
37 something they would address until next year.

38
39 Rhodes stated that they knew CPAL was moving forward, but felt they couldn't move
40 forward with an agriculture program without having it on the page for people to consider as
41 they move forward.

42
43 Antholt stated Councilmember Weimer's prioritization is doable. Public comments
44 are very important, but very labor intensive. In addition, the research of Mr. Holbrook and
45 Mr. Olason will do will take dedicated staff to get to the end of this process.

46
47 Caskey-Schreiber stated Councilmember Weimer proposed that they make the top
48 three methods and activities of the Protect/Preserve Rural/Ag Resource Land Base section
49 their first priority. In addition, include forestry as a natural resource.

50
51 ***The Council concurred.***
52

1 McShane stated he agreed. This is the area that is most critical at this time. It
2 reflects the Comprehensive Plan amendment items. The tricky part will be the methods and
3 activities. Consider alternatives in the context of land use. One step that should be
4 included is determining where those agriculture and forestry lands are. Define the
5 agriculture and forestry lands. If they make Comprehensive Plan changes to include more
6 agriculture land, then target those areas. It is the key to knowing where to put their TDR
7 and PDR efforts. If they want to encourage lot aggregation, for example, know where to
8 encourage it.
9

10 Olason stated the Agriculture Advisory Committee priority is to develop some idea at
11 where the rural lands are that have agriculture. The Council will see that. It is based on
12 parcel size ,soils, and other issues. They are trying to screen it and then determine if they
13 have the 20,000 acres left that the County needs to protect.
14

15 Fleetwood stated presumably answers will come from reviewing the Comprehensive
16 Plan applications they filed. He asked if the applications he, Councilmember McShane, and
17 John Belisle filed would be incorporated into the work plan, or if there will be a process to go
18 forward in the ordinary Comprehensive Plan review process, with staff reports for each
19 application. Olason stated staff would look at a broader work program to get at what the
20 applications were trying to get. Staff needs consensus from the Council to do that. That is
21 the basis for describing the methods. That's what the applications asked for. It is
22 something the Council needs to talk about more. They can do it either way. It depends on
23 whether the final proposal addresses what the applications wanted to address. That may be
24 the Council's test of this process.
25

26 McShane stated currently the applications are docketed. At some point, they must
27 make a decision about delaying the processing of those applications if they fit with this
28 scope. Docketing shows commitment from the Council to take action on those items. The
29 administration has committed a large amount of work, which he appreciates.
30

31 Desler stated the agriculture issues are important to the Executive's Office. People
32 don't fully realize the Council's and Executive's commitment to agriculture. It's important to
33 get priorities from the Council. Those priorities help the administration focus on the things
34 that are most important to the interest groups involved. However, the priorities have to be
35 looked at in the context of all the issues coming forward to the County from many interest
36 groups. The administration and Council have to weigh the requests from all interest groups.
37 This discussion about the top three priorities are important.
38

39 Assisting farmers economically makes sense. If farmers can make money, they will.
40 However, the County must also make farming viable. The administration has been talking
41 about ways to encourage farming.
42

43 Brenner stated they have to add the economic development component, which is
44 types of services that are farm-related or wouldn't hinder the farmland, to the process.
45 Cottage industries must be compatible with the rural designations and agriculture uses.
46 Delve more into the cottage industry zoning if they need to.
47

48 Fleetwood asked if making land viable for farmers is an exercise that is part of this
49 program. Desler stated it ought to come through this process from the interest groups.
50 Farmers will farm if they can make a dollar. They must have farmers to protect the
51 agricultural land.
52

1 Bierlink stated the focus of this effort has to be land. Don't confuse the two issues.
2 Talk about economic development in a different venue. There are three economic
3 development investment applications in the works now. That conversation will occur, but
4 this process needs to be focused on land.

5
6 Caskey-Schreiber stated focus on farmers through the EDI program. Channel sales
7 tax money back into projects that help add value to their crops and help with distribution or
8 marketing to promote that industry.

9
10 Rhodes stated he and staff attended the agricultural summit. It was pointed out how
11 important it is to have the agriculture business at the table. The Agriculture Advisory
12 Committee has members involved in the agriculture business. As they go through the top
13 three priorities, there will naturally be review and input on these areas in terms of economic
14 development viability. He promotes economic development and doing this effort in a way
15 that people will be successful economically.

16
17 McShane stated it sounds like the administration is doing things already. Include the
18 administration's work in the list of things that are already occurring.

19
20 Caskey-Schreiber asked the next step.

21
22 Olason stated staff was hoping to find out what the Council wants to focus on and if
23 it is okay with this process. If that's the case, staff will establish who will sit on the
24 committees. Regarding the top three priorities, staff will put together additional information
25 that might be helpful. Staff will work with an advisory committee to narrow the focus on
26 agriculture rural lands. Staff could prepare an overview of those techniques to get Council
27 up to speed about programs. The next step is analysis of a working TDR program and
28 pitfalls. The question is when to go public.

29
30 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the next step is for the Council to approve a technical
31 advisory committee, have them look at these three topics, and come up with some ideas
32 about how to implement these ideas.

33
34 Olason stated staff will also have to think about this in terms of forestry.

35
36 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the Council is okay with tasking the technical advisory
37 committee with the first three components.

38
39 Brenner stated she knows people who want to participate. Open it up and include
40 anyone who wants to apply.

41
42 Caskey-Schreiber stated they have a short timeframe. Expertise is already available.
43 The Agriculture Advisory Committee includes a variety of people. Keep it smaller and more
44 efficient.

45
46 Olason asked if they need an economic development committee.

47
48 Brenner stated include an economic development committee at some level. Many
49 farmers claim they can't make a living on the land.

50
51 Boggs stated the Conservation District wants to conserve farmland for this and
52 future generations. It is very sympathetic to individuals at this time, but that is separate
53 issue. Focus on supporting farmland conservation for the future.

1
2 McShane stated it is not necessary that it be part of the current scoping priorities.
3 There is some beginnings of doing just this very thing is already taking place, outside of this
4 process. Have a technical advisory committee that can shed light on where agriculture is
5 occurring and can shed light on how to deal with the PDR and TDR programs and lot
6 aggregation. Know more about whether TDR's will allow UGA expansion. General public
7 forums will assist the advisory committees and the Council. The public needs to know all
8 the things that are going on, including economic development efforts for agriculture and
9 forestry. New ideas may come out of it. They aren't dropping the economic development
10 component, but it may not necessarily be a part of dealing with the prioritized issues. The
11 public should be aware of everything the County is doing.
12

13 Olason stated it may be helpful to look at what is going on. Have a background
14 document that provides a description of what all the agencies and programs do. There is
15 much programmatic activity and assistance now. The County doesn't do it all. Catalog
16 what all is going on.
17

18 Desler stated that given the interest in protecting the land, staff can put together a
19 new scope of work for a medium-term program that focuses on protecting the land. It may
20 involve a relatively small group of people in the community who would have a few meetings
21 and issue a more detailed report. That is one idea. If necessary, there could be a
22 consultant to do that over two or three months.
23

24 Caskey-Schreiber stated that is similar to what Snohomish County did. It was very
25 clear and concise. The public would appreciate knowing what the County is doing now and
26 what the County hopes to do. Put that together with staff and the technical advisory
27 committee. Come back with a suite of recommendations to implement.
28

29 Desler stated have an informal report at the next Natural Resources Committee for
30 approval. If that is reasonable, they can make that happen. Create a medium-term work
31 plan to focus on protection that involves a single committee including members of the
32 Agriculture Advisory Committee. Develop a sense of priorities for the community on what
33 the County does. It's like a medium-term strategic plan focused on agriculture protection.
34

35 McShane stated he is really looking for implementation of a plan, not just planning.
36 Take that information out to the public.
37

38 Desler stated that they need to get people together. This is a busy time for the
39 people who need to be involved.
40

41 Caskey-Schreiber stated there is Council consensus on moving forward the top three
42 items to a technical review process, then forward to the Natural Resource Committee.
43

44 Brenner stated she doesn't agree. This needs to be dealt with before the entire
45 Council.
46

47 Hart asked if there is consensus on the public process.
48

49 Caskey-Schreiber stated they're not there yet. The Council wants to work with a
50 technical committee first, before going to the community.
51

52 McShane stated these are the priority areas. There is a lot of ways to get there. The
53 committee can help with all the alternatives. That should go to the public.

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Fleetwood stated there is always opportunity for the public to attend any of these Council and committee meetings.

Rhodes stated the technical group will likely provide feedback on public education and economic development.

Brenner stated add one more priority, which is development and design standards with emphasis on low-impact development.

Caskey-Schreiber stated that is more detailed and narrow than this initial first pass will be.

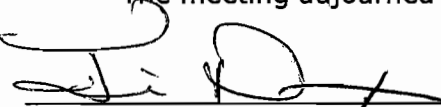
McShane stated there can be a range of alternatives. The public and Council must discuss alternatives regarding clustering, particularly if they are expanding the agriculture zone designation. To a degree, it is addressed. Don't drag in low-impact development standards in this context. It is separate from the issue of environmentally sensitive areas.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.



Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

The Council approved these minutes on June 6, 2006.

ATTEST



Dana Brown, Council Clerk

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Council Chair