



June 2, 2020

Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Members of the Whatcom County Council:

I am the Executive Secretary of the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council representing approximately 80,000 workers and, on behalf of us all, I am writing to you to express my grave concerns regarding the proposed changes for the Cherry Point industrial zone. I find those changes even more troubling as we work to restore jobs after the COVID 19 crisis.

I ask that you not pass a ninth Cherry Point moratorium and to express my grave concerns regarding the Whatcom County Council's proposed changes for Cherry Point. Workers and employers need certainty now more than ever. We must all work together to create regulations that maintain and create the family wage jobs we need.

As the leader of Washington's Building Trades, I am committed to protecting our state's industrial jobs. The regulations you are proposing will not only drive away existing industry but will chill future investment from companies that consider doing business here. We need that investment more than ever to restore the jobs we have recently lost.

Also, as leader of the state Building Trades, I have the privilege of working with many talented representatives and environmental advocates. Your proposed amendments are rooted in environmental considerations and the Building Trades prides itself on being on the front lines of protecting the environment through collaboration for jobs positive environmental regulatory compliance. The reality is that the existing regulations already contain a multitude of checks, balances, and reviews that work to effectively safeguard the environment. What you are considering does little to increase environmental protections at an extremely high economic cost to Whatcom County – especially now as we rebuild our economy.

Workers from the various crafts that make up the Building Trades occupy hundreds of jobs at Cherry Point on a consistent basis and during the major maintenance turnarounds at the refineries there are thousands of additional building trades workers who work two to three-month stints – most of them living in Whatcom County.

These proposed changes demonstrate your clear lack of understanding of how refineries work. In contrast, the Whatcom Planning Commission conducted its review in public work sessions with industry and made constructive recommendations to the proposed changes. While I feel your changes for Cherry Point are unnecessary, if you are insistent on moving forward, I hope you adopt the Planning Commission's recommendations. The members of the Planning Commission should be applauded for the transparent and collaborative review of the proposed changes, and for setting up a structure you would be wise to follow moving forward.

Now more than ever, as we struggle to rebuild our economy, we must work together to protect the environment but also implement policies that support current Cherry Point companies and jobs, and encourage new family wage employers to locate in Whatcom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. L. Riker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Riker, Executive Secretary
Washington Building Trades and Construction Trades Council

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