



Whatcom County Critical Areas Update 2016 Citizens' Advisory Committee

MEETING NOTES March 11, 2015 3:30 – 5:30 PM

Northwest Annex Conference Room, 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham

1. Call to Order

a. Sign In

CACAC Members:

- Wes Kentch
- Roger Almskaar
- Virginia Watson
- Kate Blystone
- Wendy Harris
- David Haggith

TAC Members:

- Susan Meyer

Staff:

- Cliff Strong
- Amy Dearborn

b. Approval or modification of meeting summary: Approved notes from January 21, 2015, adding David Haggith to list of members present.

c. Public Comments (5 min)

- Larry Helm – supports the Conservation District's letter submitted by George Boggs. He disputes how we delineate wetlands. Our clay soils interrupt the groundwater connectivity, and our farming practices increase soil acidity which causes wetland plants to grow where they otherwise wouldn't.
- Debbie Vander Veen – Represents Farm Bureau. Supports farmers and the CD's letter.
- John Campbell – Questioned our land use intensity definitions; raising horses is considered the same intensity as an industrial use. Is there a point system to type development (like with the DOE wetland rating system)?
- Wendy Harris – Shares concern over intensity scale. Doesn't see how we'll achieve no net loss with the amount of development occurring. We need to be more protective.
- Cliff recommended that we postpone discussion of the CD's letter until we have our meeting focusing on ag issues.
- Kate Blystone – Asked George where in the code he would like his suggestions? Also pointed out that the code uses the DOE manual for all wetlands except for farms where there's a farm plan.
- George Boggs – Said he'd be happy to come back when we focus on ag. Will draft some code language.
- Roger Almskaar – Spoke to the recent Hirst decision, and how it reiterated that applicants are not responsible for fixing past impacts. Proposed that we change our system away from standard buffers and allow consultants to do site specific analyses and base buffer widths on that.
- Debbie Vander Veen – the Farm Bureau supports the environment. The buffer widths in the code must be arbitrary since the all end in 0's or 5's.

- x. Susan Meyer – Defended the DOE recommendations on buffer widths as being based on BAS, though with political compromise. Science actually shows that buffers ought to be about 600 feet wide (to protect habitat).
 - xi. A long discussion on landscape-based planning ensued.
 - xii. Wendy Harris asked how one gets on the SEPA distribution list.
 - xiii. Robin Dexter – Toward the end of the meeting, Robin, who represents the environmental caucus on the Planning Unit, stated that we don't tie land use planning to water issues well enough, and that he hopes the committee would take them into consideration.
- d. Staff Comments (10 min)
- i. Cliff said he'd send the Hirst decision and the link to the DOE table to the CACAC.
- e. Committee Member Comments (5 min) (member comments were mixed into the audience comments, above)

2. New Business

- a. Continued review of Article 6, Wetlands section of the code

The CACAC continue its review of specific code amendments based on the CATAC recommendations. Notes attached.

3. Old Business

4. Announcements

5. Next meeting: March 18, 2015, 3:30 PM

6. Adjourn

There are eight members on the Critical Areas Citizens' Advisory Committee. If you will be giving written information to the members, please give a copy to the Staff for our office files as well.

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