

# AGENDA

## Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Online Meeting Only

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83517926824?pwd=SnVUOVRKbVBQekdrUnVzNDIySTJQZz09>

Passcode: cepoc

Friday, January 28, 2022

8:30 – 10:00 AM

1. Welcome, public comments, announcements & agenda review (10 minutes)
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes (5 minutes)
3. Discussion items/business (65 minutes)
  - Public Works Watershed Update and Water Rights Discussion
  - Staff CEP Presentation to Council in February
  - Review Draft Slides for Public Outreach
4. Next meeting (10 minutes)
  - February 25, 2022 8:30-10:00 AM- Online Meeting Only
  - Future agenda items

Included in the meeting packet (or provided at the meeting):

- December Meeting Minutes

Community members who require special assistance to participate in a committee meeting are asked to contact the meeting facilitator at least 4 business days in advance. Please contact meeting facilitator, Becky Snijder van Wissenkerke, at 360-778-5956 or [rsnijder@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:rsnijder@whatcomcounty.us).



**Determination of a Quorum/ Welcome**

We have a Quorum for the meeting.

**Public Comments**

No public comments at this time.

**Announcements**

No public announcements at this time.

**Approval of Minutes – October**

Heather moved to approve the October meeting minutes. Paul seconded. **The motion passed with all in favor.**

**Discussion Items/Business**Outreach Strategy

Becky gave an overview of outreach completed in 2021. The committee then brainstormed ideas for 2022 outreach. Ideas included:

- Write an editorial for the Lynden Tribune and Bellingham Herald
- Advertise in Cascadia Weekly, Salish Current, Northern Light, Bellingham Business Journal
- Ask partner organizations to share promotional video
- Send a larger (12 X 8) landowner mailer
- Present to the Whatcom County Association of Realtors
- Table at events such as the Small Farm Expo and Small Fruit Conference
- Meet with Port of Bellingham and other groups to build economic and public support

Henry shared that the water rights adjudication has made it so commercial agriculture is not interested in program during this time. There is concern that a third to two thirds of water rights will be gone, bringing an end to farming in Whatcom County. This concern should be considered when focusing program outreach.

CEPOC Vacancies

The committee discussed the two farmer vacancies and year end vacancies. Three committee members are eligible to reapply and encouraged to do so. Becky explained that interested people have until January 4<sup>th</sup> to apply to committee vacancies.

### FarmPAI Program

Paul announced that the WA Housing Finance Commission is offering a new loan program called the Farmland Protection & Affordability Investment (FarmPAI) program. The program offers low interest rates to land trusts to buy farmland, protect through a conservation easement, then lease or sell the land to a farmer.

The committee discussed the concern of protected farmland becoming estate farms and no longer being productive agricultural land, as has been the case in New England. Henry shared an example of a local farm that may go this route. The committee asked about options to purchase land then lease to an interested farmer. The committee also asked about the ability for protected farms to sell additional values, such as carbon credits, and the ability to stack credits. Heather mentioned that the Ag Watershed Project evaluated this.

### **Future Agenda Items**

- Water Rights Adjudication
- Presentation to Council

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, January 28, 2021, 8:30-10:00 AM. This will be an online meeting only.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.**