



ISLAND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
January 3, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.
BOCC HEARING ROOM, ROOM 102B, 1 NE 6TH ST COUPEVILLE, WA
ONLINE VIA ZOOM

**Meeting to be held in the Board of Island County Commissioners Hearing Room,
Room 102B, 1NE 6th St., Coupeville, WA and online. Interested parties can attend or join
remotely at the link or via phone number listed below:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93636892599?pwd=Y3NicFrc203OVZBTjBUenJyc21MQT09>

Meeting ID: 936 3689 2599

Passcode: 122086

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma, WA)

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Passcode: 122086

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –
4. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Submittal of written comments are encouraged prior to the day of the meeting. Public Comment may be submitted via email to PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov. Planning Commission will accept public comment for items not on the agenda. Public comments are limited to 3 minutes per person.*
5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT –
6. PUBLIC HEARING – Countywide Planning Policies – staff recommend moving this hearing to a date certain (Feb. 7, 2024)
7. WORKSHOP – Planning Commission Annual Training 2024
8. ADJOURN

Please visit our website for related documents: <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/235/Planning-Commission>
The public may submit comments in writing to Planning & Community Development at 1 NE 7th St., Coupeville, WA 98239 or PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov.



Island County Planning and Community Development

Mary Engle, Director

Physical Address: 1 NE 6th St, Coupeville, WA 98239 Mailing Address: 1 NE 7th St, Coupeville, WA 98239

Ph: Whidbey 360-679-7339 | Camano 360-387-3443 | Fax: 360-679-7306

Email: PlanningDept@islandcountywa.gov | <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/207/Planning-Community-Development>

~MEMORANDUM~

TO: Island County Planning Commissioners

FROM: Emily Neff, Long Range Planning
Island County Planning & Community Development

DATE: 12/22/2023

SUBJECT: Planning Commission Meeting 1/3/2024

The Planning Commission meeting on January 3, 2024, will include the following items:

Public Hearing: A Public Hearing was planned for the proposed changes to the Countywide Planning Policies for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. However, after feedback from the Board of Island County Commissioners, staff have been directed to meet with the Countywide Planning Group to reevaluate the percentages of housing allocated to the jurisdictions. Staff recommend moving this hearing to a date certain (February 7, 2024) in order to include potential revised housing numbers.

Workshop: Long Range staff will conduct the annual training for Planning Commissioners.

Also a reminder: The Vision Statement from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan is included in your packets, please review in advance of our January 17, 2024, meeting.

For more information, please contact:
Emily Neff (360) 678-7807 or e.neff@islandcountywa.gov

Attachments:

- 2016 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement

I.III ISLAND COUNTY VISION STATEMENT

Through comprehensive planning, the County will balance the goals of the GMA to ensure that Island County's rural character and natural beauty is protected, while meeting the housing and service needs of both existing and future county residents.

I.III.I THE FUTURE OF ISLAND COUNTY: A VISION FOR 2036

A. Open Space

When traveling through Island County one will see forests, farmlands with crops and livestock, and open space that provides for varied wildlife and flora as well as hiking and biking trails, beach access, and other open spaces for recreation.

B. Transportation

A safe transportation system will continue to be improved to first meet the needs of county residents as well as visitors and tourists. Two-lane roads that offer views of forests, farms, fields, snow-capped mountains, and water characterize the transportation system in the rural area.

C. Agriculture

Farming plays a very important role in Island County, even though many farms are small in scale. Large or small, throughout both islands, all farms in Island County, including tree farms, have unique value by contributing to the County's rural character as well as contributing to the local and state economy.

D. Rural Character

Though it is hard to describe in words, "rural character" is a crucial element of the County's economy and culture – and one of the few things virtually all residents agree is essential to the quality of life here. Rural character not only makes people "feel good" about the place where they live and provides a cultural connection to the County's past – it also has a very clear dollars-and-cents benefit. Rural character (which would not exist without the County's farms and forests) is the basis for the County's important tourist industry. It also is very attractive for retirees and for businesses that consider locating here to provide a higher quality of life for their employees.

For all these reasons, it is important as a matter of policy for the County to preserve agriculture, including those on limited acreage, especially in the face of growing pressures for residential and commercial development. Tax incentives,

EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

extension programs and "Right-to-Farm" measures help. So too does a regulatory approach that is based on best available science that protects the environment as mandated by the State's Growth Management Act, but does so in a way that is flexible that give farmers the most options in the management of their lands.

Under zoning standards, only farmland in the agricultural tax program is classified by the County as "commercial." However, both commercial and non-commercial farming play an important role in preserving the rural character of Island County. Commercial farming is significant to both the character and economy of the County. Noncommercial farming, including raising of livestock, continues to be a wide spread activity of local importance in the rural area of the County, providing a cultural connection to both the historic past and future of Island County.

E. Critical Areas

Standards have been established that protect critical areas, such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes, beaches if designated a critical area, wildlife habitat, and other critical areas. Public funding for open space acquisition has continued. Restoration and enhancement of important ecological features has occurred throughout the County, primarily along shorelines, and low-impact recreation has been added in certain locations for public beaches and forests, hiking trails, and bicycle paths.

F. Urban Growth in Urban Areas

Island County continues to develop strategies and policies achieve more growth in urban growth areas and defined areas of more intensive rural development. Langley and Coupeville have maintained their unique small town character and Oak Harbor has accepted the majority of UGA growth in Island County.

Island County has instituted measures which allow for the continuing utilization of existing lots without unnecessary sacrifice of rural character, a strong economy, and environmental protection. Island County's tradition remains evident as new development occurs. Large tracts of land, providing wildlife habitat and assistance with aquifer recharge, surround compact, dispersed settlements. Compact settlements are moderately dense and tend to reduce development pressure in more rural areas, which dominate the landscape while providing connectivity of natural areas for wildlife habitat.

G. Housing

EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Innovative affordable housing and clustering techniques allow for the efficient placement of services, protection of critical areas, and provide high-quality open space, while not detracting from the County's rural character. Land use and housing policies, including affordable housing density bonuses provide for the development of housing units for that segment of the population which could otherwise be priced out of the County.

H. **Economy**

The County continues to diversify its economy while Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey remains the largest economic engine of the County and light manufacturing has increased as an important economic factor. The County land use controls have successfully expanded job opportunities so that more local residents have the opportunity to live and work in the County. These actions have helped to relieve the pressures in off-island transportation linkages. Island County has become increasingly attractive to low-impact, appropriately scaled manufacturing, professional and service businesses, and craftspeople and artists. New businesses fit easily into both urban and rural lifestyles and provide improved wages, advancement, and career opportunities for our youth.

I. **Inter-Jurisdictional Planning**

Island County coordinates and cooperates with its incorporated towns and cities, as well as the special purpose districts that serve the County. Regulatory and non-regulatory options and incentives that respect the property rights of owners as well as community needs are balanced.

I.III.II VALUE STATEMENTS

A. **Allure of the County**

Island County's natural beauty and unique character are powerful magnets. Many lifestyles mesh well in a cohesive rural environment. Residents comprise a diversified population representing many nationalities, spanning all age groups. Some residents are from local families have been part of the county for generations, and other residents are relatively new to Island County. Reflecting consistency and change at the same time is part of what makes Island County unique.

B. **Comprehensive Planning**

Through comprehensive planning, Island County has taken measures to manage growth. This will ensure that the quality of life, traditional values, desirable rural lifestyle, and small town character which have created a "feeling of community" throughout Island County for over a hundred years, are protected and maintained for current and future generations.

C. **Impact of Past Decisions**

EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Many of the options available to Island County have been shaped by the land use decisions made in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Very few large parcels of land remain in the County. Parcel sizes are mixed, with smaller lots predominating along the shoreline. Most of these small lots are developed. While the County has large areas that are forested and appear undeveloped with an average density less than one person per acre, the average County lot size is less than three acres. Thus, traditional zoning actions (such as large lot zoning) will be ineffectual in preserving rural character.

D. Challenge

Planning through the year 2036 poses a significant challenge: containing existing areas of more intensive development, experiencing continuous growth, and attempting to maintain rural character. The overall goals seek to preserve the historic, rural economy and character, protect the environment, conserve critical areas, build a strong modern economy and provide for affordable housing - all the while finding a proper balance between government regulations and private property rights.

Rural character is one of Island County's most valued assets, providing diversity, a sense of community, and the quality of life desired by many island residents. Longtime residents and newcomers agree that a slow-paced, rural character has attracted and kept them here. Rural lifestyles provide privacy and individuality, allow people to set their own pace, bring people closer to nature and their neighbors, and offer the opportunity for family development in a safe environment. Many of the families who own and manage the county's farms and forest properties hope to see their livelihoods continue for generations to come, but view certain development regulations as an interference to their continued way of life.