

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - March 26, 2025

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of March 26, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Jim Stoneman, William McCombs, Frank Jeretzky, Paul Ryan, Luke Currier, and Mike Mills were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

There were no minutes submitted for approval.

Public Comment

Shui Jaun Mu, Anacortes, said she attended the open house last Thursday. There was a lot of information presented. Many people said it was hard to follow, so they did not ask questions. She expressed concern about the calculations. She asked for the baseline for Anacortes and the consultant said they would provide that information to staff. She recommends using non-Covid years for determining the baseline. She expressed concern at how the index blocks were calculated.

Marlee Finley, served on the climate policy team. She pointed out that some of the information is complicated. It sometimes takes a smaller group to take a deeper dive into the details. Mike Mills reminded everyone that those meetings were taped, so the public can see them if they'd like.

Mark Robinson, Skyline, commented that Washington State legislature is trying to reign in the craziness that has gone on. There is new legislature for permit timelines. He asked if the City has a plan in place to bring the permit system into compliance with these timelines. He feels that the process needs to be improved.

Linda Martin pointed out that there is a letter she wrote in the packet. There are some citizen comments about that letter. She clarified that she was not able to attend the open house, so she provided this letter. She was surprised that it was included in the packet. She clarified that she wrote the letter because she's really concerned about the politically charged atmosphere locally and throughout the nation. We have worked so hard on this Comprehensive Plan, but realize that due to the local climate, we will likely turn off half of the population. She urged the community to find common ground. She does not want the Comprehensive Plan to become controversial.

Written Comments Received Prior to Publication of Packet

Public Hearings

Other Business

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update - Climate Element Introduction

John Coleman said tonight is a comprehensive explanation as to why we are required to do the Climate element of the Comprehensive Plan update. The Climate element is to address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and resiliency from the effects of climate change. There will be a lot of background information along with the findings of the resiliency study. Staff and the consultants will work on the goals and policies to address those concerns. Much of this work has been done with the climate committee. Goals and policies are still being worked on and will be presented to Planning Commission at the next meeting. There will be a public hearing on those goals and policies after that presentation. This is a good opportunity for the community to see all the work that has been done so far.

Katie Saunders, Makers Consulting, reviewed what will be discussed tonight. The State has a new

requirement to plan for climate change during the Comprehensive Plan process. The Climate element was established in 2023 by HB1181. Different communities have different requirements. Anacortes is required to plan for the GHG reduction and resiliency sub-elements. Communities are also required to advance environmental justice and avoid environmental health disparities. Matrix has been following the guidance from the Department of Commerce. There are overlaps with these elements to GMA goals. We are taking a comprehensive approach to this. She reviewed the 3 minimum requirements for the GHG emission sub-element. Jurisdictions will be required to submit reports on 5-year progress on the implementation of these policies. She moved on to the 3 minimum requirements for the resilience sub-element. Anacortes has a broad range of impacts from climate change. There needs to be at least one goal and policy for each climate-exacerbated hazard.

Will McCombs asked for a definition of "environmental justice".

Ms. Saunders read the definition from the Department of Commerce. She reviewed the process to date on this element and the 2 sub-elements. Anacortes is currently in the goal planning phase. She reminded the Commissioners that although this is a new element, Anacortes already has some policies from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update that Matrix has been building off of. She reviewed the guiding principles that helped to facilitate the Comprehensive Plan update. Some of these came from 2016 Comprehensive Plan update higher level goals that became guiding principles. Many of these will continue to live on!

Linda Martin asked if the draft of the Climate element is done and available for Planning Commission review.

Katie Saunders clarified it will be shared with the Planning Commission soon. The key feedback point from open houses and survey is that community members state they have already started to take action to reduce GHG at home. We asked about barriers or challenges. The concerns raised were the cost of building improvements and/or electric vehicles, not feeling safe walking or biking, and transit service doesn't meet the need; the concern for wildfires has come up at every meeting and survey; there's been general support for the findings of climate vulnerability index maps; and lastly there's a desire for action. We developed the climate explorer tool for citizens to use. She pointed out that there was a range in responses at the listening session for Marine & Industry.

Beth Miller, Parametrix, reviewed the GHG inventory. This is an accounting of all the GHG's that are emitted or removed from the atmosphere during a specified time period for an organization or geographic boundary. GHG's come mostly from the combustion of fossil fuels, but also includes emissions from other sources. GHG inventories provide an emissions baseline and a means to track emissions reductions over time and progress toward goals. The different GHG's have different effects on the atmosphere. There are 3 ways to take the GHG inventory. The first 2 are not as useful for understanding where cities should focus their energy. We did a point-in-time measurement of GHG's in Anacortes. This gave us a clear picture of what's going on which allows us to take action in a very informed way. This will also assist with tracking the progress after implementing the policies. She reviewed the different kinds/scopes of emissions that are included in the GHG inventory. Scope 1 is within the City boundary, scope 2 is grid-supplied energy and scope 3 is generated outside the City boundary. The Anacortes inventory was from 2022 because it takes a long time for them to publish the data for these sources.

Will McCombs asked if any correction factor is needed due to COVID-19 occurring during the review period, especially in regard to tail pipe emissions.

Beth Miller clarified that there was not a drastic change in 2022, so no need for correcting.

Linda Martin pointed out that scope 1 and 2 equal 52% and scope 3 is 48%.

Ms. Miller agreed. She pointed out that scope 1 & 2 are the local emissions and scope 3 are the imported emissions.

Linda Martin asked why the refineries were excluded.

Beth Miller said they are technically not within City limits. They will be included in the Skagit County emission inventory. We included the ferries in the City as the fueling occurs within the City limits. She reviewed the equivalent of one metric ton of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) to give scale. Our local

emissions in 2022 were 486,000 MT CO₂e. She pointed out that the forest lands actually created an emission reduction in CO₂e. Commerce is asking communities to address the local emissions.

Mike Mills pointed out that in Scope 1 & 2, it adds up to 245,000. He asked if that is CO₂ directly or CO₂e. Ms. Miller said it is mostly CO₂. Waste and refrigerant are not CO₂ directly. Almost everything else is combustion of fossil fuels, which releases mostly CO₂.

Jim Stoneman asked if the percentages between local and imported are comparable to other communities. Beth Miller said it is.

Katie Saunders clarified that communities don't have to include imported emissions based on how they are doing their inventory.

Ms. Miller agreed. It is not required because it's harder to control. We included it because it is such a big issue. People need to understand that it's not just what you drive, but also the things you purchase.

Linda Martin asked if the report for Anacortes will include only local emissions.

Beth Miller clarified it will only include local emissions. She moved on to review the local emissions sources. For building energy, PSE is relatively carbon intensive compared to the regional grid. This will decrease when the laws come into effect to require PSE to reduce emissions. She moved on to transportation. Ferries are hard to incorporate as they move between different areas. Since most of the ferries only fuel in Anacortes, you can use 1/2 of the fuel sales.

Frank Jeretzky pointed out that the ferries service 2 counties. He asked how that is taken into account.

Ms. Miller said she is not sure what San Juan county is doing. We decided to use 1/2 of fuel sales because it's reproducible in the future and accurate. This allows us to measure progress over time.

John Coleman pointed out that we have very little control over the policies for ferries. Those organizations will be handling reduction of GHG's through their own policies. We just need to be consistent in measuring this so that it can be measured in the future. Other counties will also have to inventory the GHG emissions for the ferries.

Will McCombs asked if they separated the fuel sales into recreational versus commercial marine.

Beth Miller said they are not able to differentiate those. She moved on to forest emissions, which is estimated through satellite imaging. They look at changes in tree canopies over 20 years and then create a yearly average. For waste, we collected how many tons of garbage was collected in Anacortes and then used a calculator based on population and waste treatment type to understand the emissions. Imported emissions are based on the community income levels to estimate the emissions for all of these different sources. She reviewed the GHG inventory key findings slide. This is a projection over time given the current State regulations. There is a significant portion that is estimated to be reduced by state-level regulations. There are some remaining emissions that need to be addressed to get to net-zero.

Linda Martin asked if the State adopted the Paris climate agreement that the net-zero line is based off of.

Ms. Miller agreed it is based on the Paris climate agreement. If we are able to get close to net-zero by 2050, we will be able to avoid some of the worst impacts of climate change. Communities need to help the State to meet the net-zero goal. She reviewed the things that communities can do; such as reducing VMT through land-use decisions. If you put people where they need to be, they don't need to drive as much. Other options are to switch residential heat to electric; increase local renewables; switch commercial and industrial heat to electric; and support switching to renewable diesel.

Luke Currier asked for an explanation for increasing local renewables.

Beth Miller said it's basically solar at this time. This is a preview of key areas that can be worked on and where we're headed.

Katie Saunders moved on to climate vulnerability. Some key impacts are sea level rise/ coastal flooding; changes in precipitation; heat; and wildfires. Regarding heat, a quick change in temperature can be more impactful than gradual changes or gradual increases in temperature over time. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is where wildlands meet more developed lands, which has a higher wildfire risk. Anacortes has quite a bit of this. Commerce advised us to identify the local assets that are key to the community. These are the climate sectors. Within each sector, we identified some of the local assets. The climate team reviewed these

too. We then developed the Anacortes climate vulnerability index. It is a composite index of 3 separate indexes that assess different aspects of how climate affects communities. They are adaptive capacity index, sensitivity index and exposure index. All of these together inform the vulnerability. She reviewed the climate impact map.

Linda Martin asked if that would be a tool for the community to use in the future.

Katie Saunders agreed. She continued to review the components that contribute to the 3 indexes. These are tools for understanding the impacts to the community.

Linda Martin wondered if staff tracked if we received input from people in the darker areas on the maps.

Ms. Saunders said they did not track that, but staff worked with providers that work with those individuals.

We then looked at the vulnerability and risk assessment. She reviewed the chart with the climate risks. All of these are increased risks, but some are low, moderate, or high. She reminded the Planning Commission that low does not equal zero risk. This can help prioritize what to focus on. She reviewed the key asset vulnerabilities such as Hwy 20 flooding, wastewater treatment facility, extreme heat vulnerability, etc.

Linda Martin pointed out that heat was mentioned quite a bit in the report. She asked if we are considering getting colder in the winter, which is a vulnerability.

Katie Saunders clarified that the trend is focused on increasing heat which leads to higher risk of vulnerability. There are significant changes in increased heat risks the further we project into the future. This plan will be the building blocks for the future.

Planning Commission Rules of Procedure discussion

Linda Martin said the Planning Commission needs to determine if we want to add RCW 35A to the Rules of Procedures. The City Attorney is leaving it up to us. The Mayor brought this up in his mayoral report and it seems to apply to us as well.

Mike Mills feels there is no reason not to add it.

Will McCombs moved to include RCW 35a in the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure. Jim Stoneman seconded. All ayes.

Planning Department Update

John Coleman pointed out that we had the third Comprehensive Plan open house last week. This was the first roll-out of the Climate element of the Comprehensive Plan. There are 2 more meetings about this topic coming to the Planning Commission. Staff just received the draft goals today and have not had time to review them. We will try to get that published as soon as possible.

Adjournment

Chairperson Martin adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.