Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) Small Group Meeting Notes

August 28, 2026 from 1-3 pm

Skagit Public Utility District Aqua Room, 1415 Freeway Drive, Mount Vernon

Purpose: *To provide input to County staff regarding a recommended Clean Energy Code. Code amendments will include siting criteria and create a more efficient permitting process for clean-energy projects and will assess impacts, mitigation, identify suitable areas for development and result in predictable permitting for the community and clean energy developers alike.*

Members Present

Andrew Miller	Skagit PUD No. 1
Kevin Maas	Farm Power Northwest (Fram Power Rexville)
Cole Burgess	Cascade Natural Gas
Eric Esparta	Skagit Transit

Invited but unable to attend

Matt Gill	Marathon Petroleum

Other Attendees

Anna Lundin, Zoe Tappert	Kimley-Horn
Jeanne Aungst	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lavelle Pilon	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Allen Rozema	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lyn Wiltse, Facilitator, Notetaker	PDSA Consulting, Inc.

Action Items

- All Check County website weekly for updates / contact Jeanne with questions. https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/applicants.htm
- All Please contact Jeanne et al, with additional input on this meeting's topics.
- Jeanne Ensure CEAP Small Group agendas and meeting notes are posted to the County Website.

Welcome / Introductions

Lyn began by reviewing the purpose of this group, the meeting agenda invited everyone to do introductions.

Allen welcomed everyone and explained the grant the County received from Ecology. In addition to meeting with small groups such as this, they have established a Clean Energy Advisory Group which is meeting regularly to also provide input on these four energy types selected within the scope of the grant. The County will take this feedback and draft code to share with this group buy the end of the year. They will start holding public hearings in May. The Planning and

Development Services staff looks forward to receiving input from this group on the four energy types the County is evaluating as part of this project. On August 20, Jeanne emailed the framing questions for today's discussion. These have also been posted to the County website, as will be these meeting notes.

One of the goals of this initiative is to make our permitting process more transparent and efficient so we control more of the process locally, vs. people going through EFSEC.

Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Discussion: Solar/DERs

What do you see as the Pros of allowing Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) in Skagit County?

- As a supplemental form, this can be very beneficial.
- Can use smaller micro grids to take care of communities – build resiliency.
- Make sure there are no building provisions at the state level.
- Get a better understanding about how solar integrates with the transmission system.
- Energy development is economic development – workforce opportunities.
- Community benefit – all identify here in Skagit about being very pro green energy.
- Resource potential.
- We are good are leveraging state and federal grants
- We will have a summer peak in energy usage as more and more people buy air conditioners. Solar will correlate with those demands.
- Shade in non-ag lands. Perhaps we have crops that can benefit from shade…
- Love the idea of parking lot solar and also parks.
- Lease property for renewables – royalty paid to property owner.
- Create a whole new business line for our community. What a great testing bed! An opportunity to develop an eco-friendly tech opportunity to our schools.
- Promotes an option for people to choose to get their energy from a carbon-neutral source.
- This is tech that is largely understood – high community acceptance.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) in Skagit County?

- Doesn't see much cause for concern.
- Community values open space – concern with footprint and aesthetics.
- Species life cycle and ability to recover.
- Limited resources here compared to other areas.
- Intermittent supply.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs)?

- The land next to the port would be multi-purpose. Many areas like that in the County. Could use land there to fuel buses, create a model for other agencies, with win-win benefits.

Where do you think Solar and Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) should be prohibited?

- Where it would interfere with community open space / farmland.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation?

a. If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Discussion: **BESS**

What do you see as the Pros of allowing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Skagit County?

- Same comments as for solar. The potential is there to hit the high peak times.
- The more you can make them mobilized, repurposed, etc., the better.
- The design principle of Biomimicry in future green energy – bring some anatomy into the though process.
- Gets rid of energy usage swings.
- Brings resiliency to the local utility provider.
- Provide opportunities to avoid infrastructure investments.
- Can help avoid transmission/distribution infrastructure expansion.
- Efficiency and resiliency and the hope that would create some cost reductions.
- In general, batteries are great. It is just a scale question. If residential scale, should be already covered. Explicit allowance?
- Need a threshold component of what it interconnects with and how it is used. (For PSE< 5 MW is their threshold for utility scale. Size, scale, and density will inform impact. Currently 4 acres is required per MW.)
- Is the County interested in supporting the energy needs of other areas? Might this be a taxable opportunity? (We currently export water from our watershed to Whidbey Island.)
- The goals is to expand energy development. Helpful to benchmark against an established metric.
- Provides second market for vehicles – can repurpose.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Skagit County?

- They are political – negative public perception looms large.
- Lack of messaging around risk to reward. Risks are well known/ overblown, and benefits have not been clearly stated.
- Need to better understand the risk/reward ratio.
- This has become binary. It has become a moral vs. scientific issue.
- Physical imprint with critical minerals.
- NIMBY – parallels with data centers.
- Let's learn from others with more resources.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow BESS?

- No discussion.

Where do you think BESS should be prohibited?

- No discussion.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation? If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

- No discussion.

Renewable Fuels (apart from the infrastructure)
What do you see as the Pros of allowing renewable fuel sources for producing energy in Skagit County?

- There may be a niche in the future.
- Put a threshold into a permissive code - local feedstock. No special use permit is needed.
- There are credits available.
- Make code applicable to electric and RNG compatible.
- PSE's peaker plants – renewable fuels are cost prohibitive, but still viable in the State's eyes.
- Potential use in the maritime industry. Possible other industries as well.
- Hydrogen – potential benefits from green, solar harnessed energy to powering an electrolizer…
- Electric can only go so far. Hydrogen makes better sense for Skagit Transit. We need a good communication strategy to break past stereotypes for hydrogen production. We need an administration to help keep all this going.
- Hydrogen can be a complement to BESS.
- If have an energy project we want to being into a brownfield, could there be an expedited process? Many are zoned for industrial.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing renewable fuel sources for producing energy in Skagit County?

- Horribly expensive. Will never compete against solar and BESS.
- Only makes sense if the state decides they want more renewable fuels.
- Cumbersome for a landfill also be a wholesale energy provider.
- DERs could include renewable resources.

Incentives the County would provide to make it easier?

18 years ago, the County permitted a manure digester on a farm next to another farm (Kevin – Farm Power NW). They produce just under a megawatt. They need 1,000 cows for their digester. Skagit County is down to 6 dairies now. How is this sustainable?

Check Whatcom County code – using heat for condos in Bellingham.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow renewable fuel sources for producing energy?

- No discussion.

Where do you think renewable fuel sources for producing energy should be prohibited?

- No discussion.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation? If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

- No discussion.

Fusion (not Fission) SMRs

What do you see as the Pros of allowing Fusion Small Modular Reactors in Skagit County?

- Dumps heat and does not need water to cool.
- Would bring in some qualified individuals who make a good salary. This might create an economic boom for the community.
- Major base load power. No interruptability for the grid.
- Low emissions.
- Higher energy density per sq. ft.

What do you see as the Cons of allowing Fusion Small Modular Reactors in Skagit County?

- Narrative could get highjacked – "bringing in baby nukes."
- Make sure spent fuel is fully secured against a major disaster.
- Confusion between fusion and fission… Developers might leverage this.
- Marshland considerations, seismic code.
- Consider endangered species.
- Does the County want to take a progressive stand or be more protective/defensive when it comes to clean energy?
- Somehow capture tidal energy.
- Tribal relations need to be taken into consideration (Allen assured all this is occurring and that the County contracted each of the four federally recognized tribes about this initiative early on.).

Discussion / Suggestions:

- Global mitigation projects: Leverage as much of the existing infrastructure as you can. Zoning changes for energy use could be streamlines. Allow the zoning change in an expeditious way.
- Require proof of contact to major utility providers.
- Pros have to outweigh the cons. List the tangible benefits to the County and its residents.
- Create community benefit agreements.
- Create a scorecard. This is a great project because: List all the community benefits and the Commissioners can use them as talking points. Certain benefits can help expedite the process. The scorecard can be an infograph that can be put on the website and shares with others.

Where in unincorporated Skagit County does it make sense to allow Fusion Small Modular Reactors?

- No discussion.

Where do you think Fusion Small Modular Reactors should be prohibited?

- No discussion.

Looking at the Cons identified, can any of those be addressed through Mitigation? If yes, then what would Mitigation look like?

- No discussion.

Next Steps on the CESP Process

Allen thanked everyone for their input, making this such an informative, energizing, and also optimistic discussion!

The County's deadline to submit a draft code to the Planning Commission is February 2027. An updated clean energy code must be adopted for Skagit County by May 2027. They will be gathering policy guidance from the CEAG while reaching out to gather additional public and agency input and will begin convening small stakeholder group meetings in August. The Board of County Commissioners has already begun government-to-government talks with the four federally recognized Tribes. Small group meetings will all be listed on the website and information from these groups will be shared with the CEAG.

In the meantime, all are invited to reach out to Jeanne, or any of the other County members here with any questions and/or with any additional input.