

**YAKIMA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 5:30 PM

Location: Yakima Valley College

1704 W. Nob Hill Boulevard, Yakima, Washington, 98902

and

Microsoft Teams Meeting

I. **Call to Order:** Chair Doug Mayo called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and requested the roll call.

A. Roll Call. A quorum was present at roll call:

1. **Planning Commission Members Present:** Doug Mayo, Mike Shuttleworth, Holly Castle, Jerry Craig, Isidra Sanchez, and Sergio Garcia (Sergio left shortly after the meeting started)
2. **Planning Commission Members Absent:** Raul Martinez (unexcused)
3. **Yakima County Planning Staff Present:** Tommy Carroll, Olivia Story, Aaron M. Cohen, and Keith Wolf
4. **Public Present:** Andi Hochleutner (Central Washington Home Builders Association) and Erin Lynch (OneEnergy Renewables)

B. Approval of March 12, 2025, minutes. Jerry moved to approve the minutes for the February 12, 2025 meeting, as presented, Mike seconded, & the motion was approved 5-0.

II. Public Comments. None.

III. New Business.

IV. Unfinished Business.

A. Update on LRN2023-00001 – Comprehensive Plan and Development Standards for Moderate to Large-Scale Solar Facilities – Topic Addressed: Agrivoltaics.

1. Tommy outlined the draft agrivoltaics ordinance in front of the PC and the next steps if they do not have substantive changes. A summary of Tommy's presentation is below:

- i. The draft ordinance in front of the PC addresses the issues brought up in the March meeting by redirecting agrivoltaics for large-scale solar facilities to areas outside of irrigation districts and only for parcels in the Agricultural (AG) Zoning District. Tommy proceeded to show visuals of these areas;
- ii. The main areas meeting the criteria listed above are the eastern portions of the County along State Route 24 and Highway 241, and the area between the Wenatchee Irrigation District and the City of Selah. Solar companies are already locating projects along SR 24 and Hwy 241 as those

are where the transmission lines are, therefore, this draft ordinance is consistent with current patterns of large-scale solar project development;

- iii. Developers will not build solar facilities more than 1 mile from a transmission line due to cost (estimated at \$1M/mile based on discussions with developers);
- iv. A question poised to the PC was if they wanted the agrivoltaics section of the draft ordinance taken out;
- v. EFSEC (Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council) can approve large energy projects independently of the County. Even new EFSEC projects are facing delays due to interconnection wait times with PacificCorp;
- vi. EFSEC is not required to adhere to the GMA. Yakima County is leading the charge in raising this issue with the legislature;
- vii. De-designating land out of the Agriculture Designation is difficult in Yakima County because a majority of the soil designated as agriculture would produce crops with water;
- viii. Small-Scale Systems that just provide power to offset energy demands generated on-site would be allowed outright with no land use review, just building permits. The panels would still be subject to all applicable code requirements under Title 19, 16C (critical areas), and 16D (shoreline jurisdiction);
- ix. Large-scale systems (utility scale) require a Type 4 land-use review (final decision made by the Board of County Commissioners); and,
- x. The way the draft ordinance is currently written, Yakima County should be protected from an appeal, while allowing agrivoltaics;

2. A discussion on the draft agrivoltaics ordinance occurred and is summarized below:

- i. There was a discussion about removing language asking the applicants how they are meeting the goals and policies of the Growth Management Act (GMA) due to potential litigation issues;
- ii. Stronger weed control language under the conservation reserve program (CRP) will be added to the language under YCC 19.18.435(4)(g). This language is to assist in preventing the spread of weeds and decreasing fire risk due to overgrown brush;
- iii. Concerns were raised about misuse of agrivoltaics as people would only put three livestock on the property and say it is agrivoltaics. There is a concern allowing agrivoltaics is loophole to larger solar facilities;
- iv. The high application fee for a large-scale solar facility is based on the expected staff time to review such an application and is the same as the linear transmission facility permit fee. The Planning Division is conducting an application fee survey in the near future, as the last one was a decade ago;
- v. A large question is who do we want managing the permits, EFSEC or the Yakima County Planning Division?;

1 vi. There was discussion about whether large-scale solar projects should be
2 allowed in the Remote/Extremely Limited Development Potential (R/ELDP-
3 40) Zoning District. The R/ELDP-40 contains areas with steep slopes,
4 endangered plants, and shrub-steppe restoration goals that prevent
5 development and has a minimum lot size of 40 acres; and,
6 vii. The thought of including the use in the R/ELDP-40 Zoning District is based on
7 what similar attributes the zoning district has to the AG Zoning District was
8 discussed. Some of the Planning Commissioners did not want the R/ELDP-40
9 Zoning District included because it could affect the views of the mountain.
10

11 3. The next steps are as follows:
12 i. Mike made a motion to remove the proposed language under YCC
13 19.18.435(5)(a)(iii) asking applicants to demonstrate how their proposal is
14 GMA compliant, add stronger weed control and CRP language to YCC
15 19.18.435(4)(g), and make agrivoltaics an option as opposed to a
16 requirement, Doug seconded, and the motion passed 5-0;
17 ii. Doug made a motion to allow large-scale solar facilities in the R/ELDP-40
18 Zoning District, Isidra seconded, and the motion failed on a vote of 2-3;
19 iii. The next steps are for Tommy to make the required changes, submit the
20 ordinance with maps for the 60-day review by the Department of
21 Commerce, consult with the PC if there are any substantive changes, and
22 then schedule a public hearing on the draft ordinance; and,
23 iv. Tommy will inquire with the Assessor's Office on the following questions and
24 get back to the PC:
25 a. Does placing a solar facility on the land disqualify the property from the
26 open space program? The PC thinks it should;
27 b. Are the solar panels themselves considered in the property taxes levied
28 against the property? The PC thinks they should.

29

30 **V. Communications**

31 **A. Reports of subcommittees and study groups.** None.

32 **B. Status report of cases before the BOCC.**

33 1. The hearing on the Agritourism ordinance is scheduled for next Tuesday, April
34 15;
35 2. The stock restricted work group has started their meetings. Meetings open to
36 the public are expected to happen around June. At the current moment,
37 the work group is looking to reduce the stock restricted areas across the
38 county to some level. Tommy is a non-voting member of the work group.

39 **C. Secretary's Report.** None.

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41 **VI. Adjournment or continuance to a date, time, and place.** Mike made a motion to
42 adjourn, Jerry seconded, no one objected. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

- 1 Minutes approved by the Planning Commission on _____.
- 2
- 3 Signed: _____
- 4 Planning Commission, Chair

DRAFT