



SKAMANIA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA

Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 6:15 PM

REMOTE PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM MEETING TELEPHONE AND VIDEO CONFERENCE

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

4. AGENDA ITEMS

- a. Approval of minutes from the March 2, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting.
- b. Workshop to discuss alternative energy facilities.
- c. Workshop to discuss recreational facilities.

5. PLANNING COMMISSION BUSINESS

6. ADJOURN

Participation Instructions:

To join the Zoom meeting online, visit [**https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6564597957**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6564597957).

To join by telephone, call **(253) 215-8782**, and enter the following meeting ID when prompted: **656 459 7957**



SKAMANIA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 2, 2021, 5:30 PM

REMOTE PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM MEETING TELEPHONE AND VIDEO CONFERENCE

1. CALL TO ORDER

Cyndi Soliz called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Cyndi Soliz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Planning Commissioners Present: Anita Gahimer Crow, Sue Davis, John Prescott, Cyndi Soliz

Staff Present: Mike Beck, Andrew Lembrick, Alan Peters

Others: Michelle McConnell, Washington Department of Ecology; Ethan Spoo, WSP

4. AGENDA ITEMS

- a. Approval of minutes from the February 16, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting.
Anita Gahimer Crow noted a typo in section 4b of the minutes. Sue Davis moved to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting with this correction. John Prescott seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

- b. PUBLIC HEARING – Joint state/county hearing on the Shoreline Master Program Periodic Review

Alan Peters provided a summary of the shoreline master program and the periodic review process and stated that public comment would be accepted through March 4, 2021.

Cyndi Soliz opened and closed the public hearing at 5:41 PM. No public was present to provide testimony.

Mary Repar, resident, notified staff that she had disconnected from the meeting during the public hearing, but wished to testify on this item. Cyndi Soliz reconvened the hearing at 6:03 PM to allow Ms. Repar to speak. Ms.



SKAMANIA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Repar spoke about the importance of maintaining public access to shorelines.
Cyndi Soliz closed the public hearing again at 6:09 PM.

c. Workshop to discuss alternative energy facilities.

Cyndi Soliz led a discussion on draft text amendments regarding small-scale wind and solar facilities that were proposed in 2013 by the Planning Commission. Alan Peters stated that technology and perceptions have changed since 2013, and that some changes to the draft might be appropriate. The Planning Commission discussed their concerns and recommendations regarding the proposal and agreed to provide feedback directly to staff. Alan Peters said he would provide a revised draft for the next meeting.

5. PLANNING COMMISSION BUSINESS

None.

6. ADJOURN

Cyndi Soliz adjourned the meeting at 6:30 PM.



Skamania County

Community Development Department

Building/Fire Marshal • Environmental Health • Planning

Skamania County Courthouse Annex

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Skamania County Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Staff
DATE: March 16, 2021
RE: Alternative Energy Facilities

BACKGROUND

Planning Commission Chair Cyndi Soliz has requested that the Planning Commission resume the county's prior efforts to adopt provisions for alternative energy facilities in the zoning code. After the Planning Commission discussed the 2013 draft regulations at its March 2, 2021 meeting, County staff prepared a revised draft for the Planning Commission's review.

"Alternative energy facility" refers to wind and solar facilities that generate energy for on-site consumption. A roof-mounted solar system that generates electricity is an example of an alternative energy facility.

ANALYSIS

The proposal would provide for the development of small-scale accessory alternative energy facilities that generate energy for on-site consumption. The systems regulated under the proposal include solar and wind energy systems, among others, that serve uses on the same lot as which they are located. The proposal does not apply to utility scale or commercial energy production.

The revised draft was prepared based on feedback from the Planning Commission at the March 2, 2021, and was also informed by staff's review of ordinances from other jurisdictions around the country. Similar standards are found in many other jurisdictions, but the degree of regulation and oversight varies. The revised draft has been reduced to about one-third the length of the original draft while maintaining many of the objectives of the original proposal.

Definitions

The proposal would adopt definitions for the following terms:

- Accessory Solar Energy Facility, Building-Mounted
- Accessory Solar Energy Facility, Freestanding
- Accessory Wind Energy Facility, Building-Mounted
- Accessory Wind Energy Facility, Freestanding
- Accessory Alternative Energy Facility

These definitions would replace the terms and definitions that were adopted as part of Ordinance 2014-02 for “rooftop solar energy facility”, “rooftop wind energy facility”, “small-scale solar energy facilities”, and “small-scale wind energy facilities”.

The revised definitions are simplified, but also allow for additional flexibility in how these systems may be used. For example, the existing definitions for “rooftop solar energy facility” may be interpreted to limit the installation of solar panels onto building rooftops. The revised definition would allow for other types of building-mounted installations, such as window awnings. Additionally, the existing definition could be interpreted to limit the use of solar generated energy to the building on which the system is located. For example, under the existing definition, electricity generated from solar panels located on a detached garage would need to be used within the garage, but could not be used for a dwelling or other uses on the same property. The revised definition would not include any such restrictions.

Output to grid

Alternative energy systems sometimes produce more energy than is needed to meet the energy demands of a property. This excess energy can be stored onsite in batteries, output to the utility grid for net-metering, or less-often, wasted. The proposal would allow this excess energy to be delivered to the utility grid if the owner has coordinated with and met all requirements of the grid operator.

Review requirements

Under the proposal, almost all systems would be allowed outright as long as they comply with the proposed standards. Only freestanding wind facilities in excess of the 35 ft. building height limitation would require a conditional use permit.

All facilities would require building and electrical permits from the Skamania County Building Division and the Washington Department of Labor and Industries.

Development standards

The proposal establishes standards for solar and wind energy systems. These standards are intended to provide some flexibility for the development of these systems, while mitigating potential impacts to adjacent property owners.

Development standards for solar facilities

- Building-mounted systems may extend up to 5 ft. above the standard height limitation. This would allow flexibility in the placement and orientation of solar collectors in order to maximize energy production. It would also allow solar systems to be added to existing buildings that are already at the maximum allowable building height of 35 ft.
- Freestanding facilities would be required to comply with the existing setbacks for accessory structures and would be limited to a maximum height of 20 ft.
- Facilities would be required to avoid glare, reflection, or hazards onto adjacent properties and roadways.

Development standards for wind facilities

- Building-mounted systems may extend up to 15 ft. above the standard height limitation. This would allow flexibility in the placement and orientation of wind turbines in order to

maximize energy production. It would also allow turbines to be added to existing buildings that are already at the maximum allowable building height of 35 ft.

- Freestanding facilities would be required to be sited and designed to minimize noise and visual impacts to the surroundings. This requirement is supported by the other proposed setback, height, and noise standards.
- The maximum allowable heights are 80 ft. for parcels below 5 acres, and 95 ft. for parcels above 5 acres. However, any facilities in excess of the 35 ft. height limit would require approval of a conditional use permit.
- The required setback is equal to 1.5 times the height of the facility. This setback is intended to protect life and property in the event that a facility collapses.
- Facilities would be limited to noise levels of 55 dBA (roughly equivalent to a household refrigerator) when measured at the property line. This restriction would not apply to agricultural uses or uses in commercial or industrial zones.

Abandonment

The revision includes a requirement that inoperable systems be removed or repaired within one year of becoming inoperable.

NEXT STEPS

Staff requests that the Planning Commission review the draft language and direct staff as to whether the draft language should be considered as-is at a public hearing or be revised prior to a public hearing. With the Planning Commission's direction, staff will schedule the item for a future Planning Commission meeting and complete the required noticing.

21.70.200 **ACCESSORY ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FACILITIES**

- 1 A. It is the purpose of this section to promote the safe, effective, and efficient use of small-scale
2 accessory alternative energy facilities, while setting practical guidelines for such implementation
3 that are respectful of the neighborhood context within which such systems may occur. These
4 facilities include, but are not limited to, solar and wind energy systems. This section does not
5 apply to or authorize utility scale or commercial alternative energy systems.
6
- 7 B. Energy produced by accessory alternative energy facilities is intended to be utilized on site;
8 however, excess energy output may be delivered to the utility grid if the owner has coordinated
9 with and met all requirements of the grid operator.
10
- 11 C. Unless otherwise noted in this section, accessory alternative energy facilities are considered an
12 accessory use related to the primary use of the property and shall be allowable in all zoning
13 classifications. Compliance with this section shall not remove an applicant’s obligation to comply
14 in all respects with the applicable provisions of any other federal, state, local law, or regulation,
15 or relieve any person of the requirement for the safe and proper installation of all equipment.
16
- 17 D. **ACCESSORY SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 18 1. **BUILDING-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 19 i. Height: May extend up to 5 ft. above the standard height limitation.
 - 20 2. **FREESTANDING SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 21 i. Setbacks: Shall comply with the setbacks for accessory structures.
 - 22 ii. Height: Shall not exceed 20 ft.
 - 23 3. Facilities shall be designed and located to avoid glare or reflection onto adjacent
24 properties, businesses, residential homes, and adjacent roadways and shall not interfere
25 with traffic or create a safety hazard.
26
- 27 E. **ACCESSORY WIND ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 28 1. **BUILDING-MOUNTED WIND ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 29 i. Height: May extend up to 15 ft. above the standard height limitation.
 - 30 2. **FREESTANDING WIND ENERGY FACILITIES**
 - 31 i. Facilities shall be sited and designed to minimize noise and visual impacts to the
32 surrounding community.
 - 33 ii. Perch deterrents shall be placed on all surfaces where birds may be attracted and
34 struck by a moving component on the tower, such as by the sweep of a wind
35 turbine blade.
 - 36 iii. Height:
 - 37 1. For parcels 5 acres or less in area, the facility height shall be limited to
38 80 ft., measured from the ground to the highest point of the blade.
 - 39 2. For parcels larger than 5 acres in area, the facility height shall be limited
40 to 95 ft., measured from the ground to the highest point of the blade.
 - 41 3. Minimum blade clearance shall be 15 ft. above the ground located below
42 the lowest point on the blade.
 - 43 iv. Setbacks: The facility tower shall be no closer to the property line than 1.5 times
44 the total height of the facility.
 - 45 v. Review Requirements: Freestanding wind energy facilities taller than 35 ft. shall
46 be reviewed through the conditional use process.
 - 47 3. Except for wind energy systems accessory to agricultural uses or systems located in
48 commercial or industrial zones, no wind energy system shall exceed 55 dBA when

49 measured at the property line.
50 F. Any alternative energy facility which becomes inoperable shall, at the owner's expense, be made
51 operational or shall be removed from the property within one year of the date the system became
52 inoperable.

53
54

55 **REVISED DEFINITIONS IN SECTION 21.08**

56

57 Accessory Solar Energy Facility, Building-Mounted means a solar energy system that is affixed to or an
58 integral part of a principal or accessory building, including but not limited to photovoltaic or hot water
59 solar energy systems which are contained within roofing materials, windows, skylights, and awnings.

60

61 Accessory Solar Energy Facility, Freestanding means a solar energy system with a supporting framework
62 that is placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that is independent of any building or other structure.

63

64 Accessory Wind Energy Facility, Building-Mounted means a wind energy system that is mounted on a
65 principal or accessory building.

66

67 Accessory Wind Energy Facility, Freestanding means a wind energy system supported by a pole or tower
68 and is independent of any building or other structure.

69

70 Accessory Alternative Energy Facility means a small-scale energy system that provides energy to the
71 principal use or uses on the property on which it is located. These facilities include, but are not limited to,
72 solar and wind energy systems.



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Skamania County Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Staff
DATE: March 16, 2021
RE: Recreation Facilities

BACKGROUND

The vision statement of the Skamania County Comprehensive Plan is:

“Skamania County is strongly committed to protecting our rural character and natural resource-based industries while allowing for planned future development that is balanced with the protection of critical resources and ecologically sensitive areas, while preserving the community’s high quality of life.”

Recreation is an increasingly important industry to Skamania County. The comprehensive plan states that “Skamania County is a focal point of year round recreational opportunities” which include “boating, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, wildflower hiking tours, hot mineral springs day spas, golf courses, windsurfing, and kite boarding.” The plan further states that “Skamania County should strive to improve recreational opportunities throughout the County including enhancing public access to the waterways.”

ANALYSIS

While recreation development is supported by the Comprehensive Plan and the various subarea plans, the zoning code lacks clear guidelines for what types of recreational uses should be allowed and where.

As shown in the attached recreational land use matrix, the zoning code (Title 21) includes at least 21 different land use terms related to recreation. Few of these terms are defined.

“Recreation facilities” are identified as an allowable use in only one zone: Rural Estate 20 which is a zone that exists on only two properties in the county. “Recreational facilities” are identified as a conditional use in eleven other zones.

SCC 21.08.010 defines “recreational facility” as “facilities intended for public or private group recreation”. It does not define “recreation” or explain what is meant by “group” recreation. The county has approved facilities including a campground associated with an outdoor recreational use, event centers, and vacation rental cabins under this land use. Since 2010, 11 of 22 conditional use permit applications have involved recreational facilities or recreational vehicle parks.

"Outdoor recreational facilities" are allowed outright in two zones, Commercial Recreation and Destination Resort in Carson. This land use is undefined.

"Campgrounds" are allowable as conditional uses in only two zones, both in the Swift subarea. This land use is also undefined. Because "campgrounds" are identified as a separate land use, it is not clear if "campgrounds" would be considered a "recreational facility" and if they should be allowed for consideration of a conditional use permit.

Recreational vehicle parks are allowable in eight zones as conditional uses. While this use is defined in SCC 21.08.010, it is not clear if the use contemplates tent camping.

"Scout camps, church camps, and/or youth camps" are allowed outright in four zones and listed as conditional uses in two zones. They may expand as a conditional use in one zone. While this use is defined, staff understands this to apply to group camps and not campgrounds with sites available for individual use.

Many other uses are listed in detail and allowed in only certain zones, including such uses as "picnic areas", "interpretive signs and displays", and "firing ranges".

This assortment of uses and the lack of definitions causes confusion for property owners and prospective property owners and may have the consequence of discouraging development of recreational facilities in the county.

RECOMMENDATION

At a minimum, staff recommends that the definition for "recreational facilities" be revised to provide more direction as to the types of recreational facilities that are desired by the county. If this is the direction that the Planning Commission prefers, staff can prepare a draft definition after reviewing examples from other jurisdictions and considering the types of facilities that exist in Skamania County.

Another alternative is to adopt new land use terms and definitions for the various recreational uses desired by the county. If the Planning Commission prefers this option, staff would develop a list of appropriate terms and prepare definitions for these terms. Some examples of potential land uses include:

- Indoor recreational facility
- Outdoor recreational facility
- Campground
- Group campground
- Rural event center
- Retreat center

Once these land use definitions are developed, the Planning Commission may determine where and under what circumstances these uses should be allowed.

RECREATIONAL LAND USE MATRIX

	Residential 1 & 2	Residential 5 & 10	Rural Estate 20	Community Commercial	Commercial Recreation	Resource Production	Forest Lands 10/20	Commercial Resource Lands 40	Carson - Rural Residential	Carson - Rural Estate	Carson - Destination Resort	WE - Rural Lands 2	WE - Rural Lands 5 & 10	WE - Forest Lands 20	WE - Commercial Resource Lands 40	WE - Neighborhood Commercial	Swift - Mountain Recreation 5/10/20	Swift - Forest Lands 20	Swift - Commercial Resource Lands 40	Swift - Swift Recreation	Northwestern Lake - Residential 2 & 5
Recreation facilities	C	C	A																		
Outdoor recreational facilities				A					A												
Low-intensity recreation								A	A												
New recreational vehicle parks and/or campgrounds																					
New recreational vehicle parks											C	C	C								C
Small and large-scale recreational vehicle parks																					
Scout camps, church camps and/or youth camps																					
Expansion of existing legally established scout camp, church camps and/or youth camps		C	C	C																	
Retreat centers																					
Boat docks and boat ramps; picnic areas; trails for recreation; restrooms and comfort facilities; parking areas and trailheads; visitor information and environmental education signs and/or displays; interpretive signs and displays																					
Scenic viewpoints and overlooks; wildlife and botanical viewing and nature study areas																					
Camping cabin facilities																					
Moto-cross recreation																					
Firing ranges																					

A = Allowable Use
R = Administrative Review Use
C = Conditional Use