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**COMMUNITY PLANNING &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Joshua Cummings, Director

Creating Solutions for Our Future

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Jeremy Davis, Senior Planner
DATE: June 27, 2018
SUBJECT: Proposed Thurston County Building Code Amendments

Thurston County is proposing to amend Title 14 Buildings and Construction to propose changes to requirements for the benefit of the citizens of Thurston County, and for clarification of language, and other minor clerical amendments.

Summary of Building Code Amendments

Each individual chapter in Title 14 Buildings and Construction contains some of its own administrative requirements. Throughout the code series, portions of the administration sections are repetitive in regards to timelines for permit review and issuance. This repetition may give the appearance of many code changes.

Title 14 Buildings and Construction includes the following chapters:

- Chapter 14.16 Definitions
- Chapter 14.17 Building Code (Non-Residential)
- Chapter 14.18 Residential Code
- Chapter 14.19 Building Code for Existing Buildings
- Chapter 14.21 Violations and Enforcement (Defers to Title 26)
- Chapter 14.22 Code for Abatement of Dangerous Buildings
- Chapter 14.24 Mechanical Code
- Chapter 14.26 Fuel Gas Code
- Chapter 14.28 Plumbing Code
- Chapter 14.32 Fire Code
- Chapter 14.33 Board of Appeals
- Chapter 14.34 Energy Conservation Code – Commercial

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- Chapter 14.35 Energy Conservation Code – Residential
- Chapter 14.37 Grading
- Chapter 14.38 Development in Flood Hazard Areas
- Chapter 14.44 Mobile and Manufactured Homes
- Chapter 14.45 Agri-Com Buildings
- Chapter 14.48 Building Permit Process

A summary of the proposed changes is below, along with a note where they will repeat in the chapters in Title 14 Buildings and Construction.

1. Department name change – Repeats in all chapters of the Building and Construction Code.
2. Simplified language for any changes in County organization– Repeats through all chapters.
3. Corrected references to code sections as adopted by the state– Repeats through all chapters.
4. Building Code (Commercial) Chapter 14.17, Residential Chapter 14.18 and Existing Building Code Chapter 14.19.
 - a. Residential Code. Exempt accessory type structures of up to 400 square feet in the rural County and 200 square feet in the Urban Growth Area that are single story without loft or mezzanine, do not exceed 16 feet to the highest point of the roof in urban areas, heated only for freeze protection, and with only well-related plumbing, not for commercial use, used as tool and storage sheds, play houses, small maintenance equipment and similar uses; not including vehicle storage. Codified shipping containers as structures to clarify questions from citizens.
 - b. Building Code. Exempted retail stands that do not exceed 200 square feet. Fireworks stands must be permitted through the Fire Code.
 - c. Building Code. Clarified 200 square foot exemption to be gross area to be consistent with other codes. Codified shipping containers as structures to clarify questions from citizens.
 - d. Exempt exterior siding.
 - e. Exempt windows and doors with no framing modifications.
 - f. Exempt solar panels.
 - g. Exempt free standing signs less than 32 square feet, not exceeding 8 feet in height, supported by two poles or a monument base.
 - h. Exempt flag poles less than 35 feet in height whose display complies with the United States Public Law 94-344.
 - i. Exempt replacement of electric forced air heating unit or electric heat pump.
 - j. Exempt replacement of electric water heaters.
5. Fire Code Chapter 14.32:
 - a. Exempt residential solar panel from fire code permits.
 - b. Clarify that residential LPG tanks no greater than 500 gallons do not require a permit.

- c. Revise to refer to the County Roads Standards for fire apparatus access to property.
 - d. Allowed an administrative waiver for fire flow where the occupancy is no more hazardous than the existing occupancy.
 - e. Clarify terminology of structures for fire flow purposes.
 - f. Clarify that a non-residential within a residential structure that exceeds the State definition for a dwelling must be separated by a fire wall or provide fire flow for the entire structure. No change to requirements.
 - g. Clarify the flowchart for fire flow. No change to requirements.
6. Agri-com Buildings Chapter 14.46
- a. Decreased the number of toilet facilities required.
7. All Codes
- a. Extended and clarified the expiration time for building permit applications from 180 days to one year, with two additional extensions allowed.
 - b. Extended the time allowed before an approved plan must be purchased to one year.
 - c. Changed permit expiration/extension time to use a calendar year rather than days.
 - d. Corrected references to code sections as adopted by the state.

The table located in Attachment A provides a comparison of the existing code language and the new language with the reason for modification. The proposed changes are separated by the associated chapter in Title 14 Buildings and Construction Code.

Exempt Building Size

The proposed size increase for larger nonagricultural exempt building size is from 200 to 400 square feet. Agricultural buildings meeting the International Building Code definition for an agricultural structure may already be constructed larger than 200 square feet.

Larger nonagricultural building sizes and roof extensions have been allowed in other counties in Washington State. Examples include:

- Snohomish County: 400 square feet for an unheated storage building outside of a UGA and 200 square feet inside of a UGA.
- Clallam County: 400 square feet for an unheated storage building with no plumbing.
- San Juan County: 200 square feet for an unheated storage building, with up to 400 square feet of area under a projecting roof.
- Pierce County: 200 square feet for an unheated storage building. 500 square feet for an agricultural building.

Exempt structures will still need to meet zoning ordinance, critical areas and shoreline management plan requirements. In the Special Flood Hazard Area, a flood permit will be required.

Summary of Special Flood Hazard Area Amendments

Thurston County is proposing amendments to Chapter 14.38 Development in Flood Hazard Areas that are necessary to retain the current Federal Emergency Management Agency, Community Ratings System rating. Thurston County is currently a Class 2 community which gives community members with homes inside of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) a 40% reduction in their flood insurance costs and residents outside the SFHA a 10% reduction in their flood insurance costs. Under Federal law banks are required to ensure flood insurance is purchased for all homes within the SFHA that are financed via federally backed mortgages. The insurance premium reductions for Classes 1-6 are shown below for both properties in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) and outside the SFHA. The County's point totals were just over the class 2 threshold for 2015.

Community Ratings System Premium Reductions			
Class	Credit Points	Premium Reduction SFHA	Premium Reduction Non-SFHA
1	4,500+	45%	10%
2	4,000-4,499	40%	10%
3	3,500-3,999	35%	10%
4	3,000-3,499	30%	10%
5	2,500-2,999	25%	10%
6	2,000-2,499	20%	10%

There are certain requirements the county must meet in order to keep or improve upon its Class 2 rating.

The proposed amendments to Chapter 14.38 are to respond to changes in the Federal Community Rating System (CRS) criteria to ensure the County qualifies for the necessary points to maintain its current Class 2 rating. Some of the proposed changes would also be necessary to maintain a Class 4 rating.

The proposed changes are to address a "freeboard" elevation requirement, revise the prohibition on critical facilities in floodplains, and to clarify the prohibition on fill in the SFHA and some of the definitions for terms.

Freeboard is the area above the elevation of the flood of record. The county currently has a freeboard requirement for new residential construction to be elevated two feet above the flood of record. The requirement to have freeboard must under the Federal rating criteria also be applied to non-residential, non-residential floodproofing, and utilities (electrical and mechanical) items.

The fill requirement clarifications are proposed to be consistent with other County Development Code regulations (Chapter 24.20) and to use the specific language required to comply with the Federal rating criteria for regulation of fill.