

Minutes
Point Roberts Community Advisory Committee
Special Meeting, March 9, 2019

Attendees: Stephen Falk (SF) — At Large
Linda Hughes (LH) — At Large
Tessa Pinckston (TP) — PRRVA
Steve Wolff (SW) — PRTA

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 am. LH opened the meeting stating that the sole agenda item was public comment on proposed changes to 20.72 and related design codes. She made reference to two comments on this topic submitted by e-mail after the February regular meeting:

Armene Belless: Whatever changes may be made, the height restrictions which helped prevent installation of the AM radio towers should not be eliminated.

Anonymous: Concern was expressed about prior public comments urging greater development along Gulf Road.

2. Public Comment on Possible Changes to WCC 20.72.

Attendees at the Special Meeting made the following comments (with occasional interjections by Committee members):

George Wright: The ca.2000 Sub Area Plan, as re-approved in 2017 has a “vision” statement that could be used as the basis for the current assessment of zoning. It would still be 95% accurate and just need revision based on current demographics and border crossing entry data.

Ken Calder: The Small Town Commercial Zoning is the biggest restriction on growth in Point Roberts. There are only 4 or 5 properties in Point Roberts which can handle storage of heavy equipment. There cannot be “commingling” of residential and commercial activity on single properties. (Someone commented that General Commercial does allow residential use as well.) Zoning should allow for growth. Septic conditions and parking limitations won’t allow for development.

Allison Calder: The Sub Area Plan and the zoning code do not work together. The “vision” foresees hotels and B&Bs, but they cannot be sited in the Small Town Commercial area. The Marina has needed Conditional Use permits to do what it needs. Zoning should fit what people are doing in Point Roberts.

LH: With the input from PDS shared by DG by e-mail, there is a timeline to get possible zoning changes done before the 1-year enforcement moratorium ends. PRCAC should have its proposed changes to 20.72 submitted to PDS by August 31, 2019.

SW: The zoning code was intended to be revised every so often; it can be done over time.

Vic Riley: A process plan should be established. Make a list of the specific issues that are holding back development and other shortcomings of the current zoning code. Encourage residents to submit a written list of issues.

Donna Gillespie: Cottage Industry should be addressed. It is not allowed in Point Roberts. Point Roberts is like an island; our code should be like Island County which permits cottage

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industry. [SW commented that cottage industry, having a business in a residence, is currently permitted as an “accessory use”.]

Judson Meraw: Supported creating a list of the issues, and also a list of desired outcomes. Any proposed changes should be analyzed based on likely outcomes; outcomes such as business survival, affordable housing, vital forests. Outreach under the auspices of the PRTA is progressing: characterize the stakeholders, get their input on issues, do “interest combining” (pulling different ideas together), do “community co-design”.

Vic Riley: Reiterated the value of focusing on defining the problem, separate from defining the solution.

Allison Calder: PRRVA will have special meetings to educate the community on what the current code says, and comparing the zoning under 20.72 and what it would be under Whatcom County Code without 20.72.

Heidi Baxter: Supports PRRVA’s education outreach and suggests that PRTA would collaborate with PRRVA. She does not want more storage areas, and suggested that it might be acceptable to allow storage on a certain percentage of a property. Regarding green space setbacks, 50 ft seems like a lot, but green space is a positive. There should be pedestrian areas, not necessarily paved. Conditional use permits are good since it provides for give-and-take between the property owner and the County.

George Wright: Supports education on the complex concepts involved. In revising 20.72, take the hard parts first: parking, tree retention, Gulf Road restrictions.

Donna Gillespie: 20.72 was written by lawyers who weren’t in Point Roberts [LH: No. 20.72 was written by our predecessors here in Point Roberts.]

Vic Riley: The only concrete issues identified through this public comment are (1) space for heavy equipment, (2) parking restrictions for businesses and (3) septic installation challenges.

Donna Gillespie: Claimed that 11 jobs were lost when a business left Point Roberts because of zoning. [LH: No. She works for the company and it moved to Blaine because it would be easier, not because it would have been impossible to get needed permits.]

George Wright: Passed around his zoning map for attendees to review.

Judson Meraw: Consider “human-centered design” for planning. Look at the user’s experience. A goal could be to facilitate start-up businesses.

SW: It is hard to develop zoning. Need to establish the vision. We have to develop the vision before making changes to 20.72.

Ken Calder: Zoning rules are better than conditional use permits, because the latter are expensive to obtain. 20.72 creates extra restrictions that Point Roberts does not need.

Donna Gillespie: Noise and traffic should be conditions for use under the zoning rules. If those aspects are managed, the activity should be permitted.

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George Wright: The timing is short and critical. We should do the zoning changes first and then revise the Sub Area Plan after.

Vic Riley: Use a needs hierarchy; for example, enable essential services (e.g., store places for heavy equipment), promote economics (e.g., job creation/maintenance), and preserve aesthetics.

SF: The timing urgency is based on the 1-year moratorium on enforcement that the County has offered in view of the Community's interest in revising 20.72. PRCAC and the community should not be rushing a review and revision of local zoning rules solely to meet the deadline from a single private property owner's code violation. This is a big issue being driven by a single code violation.

LH: To the contrary, PRCAC has been working on revising 20.72 and the Character Plan for years; this is not a new issues. The County moratorium is just providing a needed motivation to complete the process.

George Wright: He is the only attendee at the meeting affected by the current enforcement action. He wants to fix the broader issues, not just the one affecting his issue. Infrastructure improvements are needed on Gulf Road.

Heidi Baxter: Code violations should not drive the process. We should have a comprehensive plan.

Rick Hulse: This is a long-time problem. The code violation has pushed the need for change. If necessary, this can be an iterative process with some changes made now and others made later.

Vic Riley: Reiterated his point to identify specific issues.

SW: PDS does not want Point Roberts coming back yearly with changes to 20.72.

Heidi Baxter: Prefers not to see hotels; prefers B&Bs for accommodations for visitors.

Allison Calder: The Point Roberts Marina is trying to bring the "Whidbey Island Race Week" to Point Roberts. The Marina has been selected as one of two finalists (the other is Port Townsend). A big limitation regarding this opportunity might be the lack of accommodations.

SF: It is a mistake to believe that any changes to the zoning rules are going to change the business environment in Point Roberts. We are a small community with 1200 or 1300 or 1400 permanent residents and are cut off by an international border. We may be able to resolve the heavy equipment storage issue, but this will not change the underlying economic situation.

Judson Meraw: Can PRCAC provide a list of local code violations? [LH: There is no publicly available list.]

3. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 am.



Stephen Falk <sfalkjd@gmail.com>

local zoning

eaglewings22@hotmail.com <eaglewings22@hotmail.com>

Sun, Mar 3, 2019 at 7:53 PM

To: "comments@pointrobertscac.org" <comments@pointrobertscac.org>

Hello,

First, I'd like to say, as much as possible, it would be helpful to schedule PRCAC meetings so that they are not in conflict with other scheduled meetings & trainings on the Point. Case in point, CERT has a training scheduled on the same date and time-frame as your March 9 "special meeting". CERT is hoping that a large number of residents attend this, and I was one who was considering that. However, not there is a conflict, since I cannot be in two places at once.

Second, regarding the idea that the prohibited uses from small town commercial zone along Gulf Road would be eliminated...

I would like to have you seriously consider that Point Roberts is a very sensitive environmental area, which is being challenged by the ever-increasing encroachment of "commerce & industry". People enjoy coming here BECAUSE it is rural & a relaxing place to come and unwind, get away from it all. But eliminating restrictions on "development" for all kinds of (what's the "correct" wording??) commercial and industrial type ventures will severely encroach on this. Where would it stop?? Point Roberts is too small and rural to be crowding it with such unsightly & unnecessary businesses. I am very disappointed and increasingly more concerned with the direction Point Roberts seems to be taken by the "decision makers". This needs to remain a place to "get away" TO, not another place to "get away" FROM!

Thank you for listening.

A concerned resident.



Stephen Falk <sfalkjd@gmail.com>

20.72 changes

Armene <armenelee@yahoo.com>

Fri, Mar 8, 2019 at 1:01 PM

To: comments@pointrobertscac.org

Hi....I will not be able to attend the meeting however....Since you are gathering public support/objection information for various changes that are suggested...

Could you please publish the proposed changes so we can comment on them on line?

At the very least, I would hope that no one will want to change the 25' height restrictions (except under certain rare situations when 45' is allowed) since that is what saved us from the 5 radio-tower invasion....at a cost o \$250,000 for the people of Point Roberts and Tsawwassen.

And no, I would not support dumping 20.72 and accepting Whatcom County's regulations because the needs of Point Roberts are SPECIAL! We are not attached to the county, more like an island. Special Place+ Special Rules.

Thank you,

Armene Belless

armenelee@yahoo.com