

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Planning and Development Committee

September 9, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 3:07 p.m. by Committee Chair Seth Fleetwood in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

Dan McShane
Laurie Caskey-Schreiber

Absent:

None

Also Present:

Sam Crawford
L. Ward Nelson
Barbara Brenner
Sharon Roy

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

- 2. ORDINANCE AMENDING THE OFFICIAL WHATCOM COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE, TITLE 20, CHAPTER 20.71 – WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT, CHAPTER 20.80 – SUPPLEMENTARY REQUIREMENTS (STORMWATER AND CLEARING), CHAPTER 20.85 – PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS, AND CHAPTER 20.97 – DEFINITIONS, TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL REGULATORY PROTECTION FOR SENSITIVE WATERSHEDS (AB2002-222B)**

Fleetwood stated the requested staff report is not ready, and won't be ready until October.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

- 1. REQUEST FOR A SECOND ONE-YEAR EXTENSION FOR THE RESORT AT LILLY POINT, PUD 1991-00001 AND CUP 1991-00042 (AB2003-289)**

Roland Middleton, Land Use Division Manager, stated the recommendation is to grant the extension.

Fleetwood moved to recommend approval to the full Council.

McShane stated he is opposed to the motion. He was not convinced that the extension is necessary. The proponents should have moved forward on the project already.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Caskey-Schreiber asked what happens if the Council denies the request.
2 Middleton stated the proponent could not reapply with the current proposal because
3 development codes have changed. The original proposal was made 12 years ago.
4

5 Caskey-Schreiber asked how long it typically takes for a planned unit
6 development (PUD) to get off the ground. Middleton stated it depends on the
7 project and proponent. Cordata took a few months. A few other projects came in
8 during 1991 or 1992 and are still not done. Projects that have not had a public
9 hearing are still vested and sitting on the shelf. This project has received approval.
10 This is a very large project. The proponents spent a great deal of time doing
11 environmental review and looking at mitigating measures, which is the reason for
12 giving them one more year.
13

14 Caskey-Schreiber asked if this project meets all environmental measures
15 today.
16

17 McShane stated it wouldn't meet the tree retention rules.
18

19 Middleton stated he would have to study it. It would meet the geological
20 unstable slope section of the critical areas ordinance. The underlying issue is the
21 zoning issue. They could not do this project under current zoning.
22

23 Nelson asked the recommendation from the Chamber of Commerce for Point
24 Roberts. Middleton stated this was a controversial and well-discussed project. The
25 approvals that it does have are from the Hearing Examiner for the conditional use
26 permit and PUD. The PUD was approved by the County Council, and has been
27 extended. There was a significant environmental impact statement (EIS) for the
28 project that took a couple of years to complete. There are many comments in that
29 EIS from the Chamber and other organizations.
30

31 Nelson asked if anyone has commented on this extension. Middleton stated
32 not that he is aware of.
33

34 Crawford asked if the conditions of the original application have changed,
35 other than the more restrictive development requirements. He asked if they have
36 learned anything new about the area or if things have changed geographically.
37 He's looking for a difference between accepting the fact that this was approved and
38 gone through the process, versus something changing geographically so that they
39 need to start all over. Middleton stated there is no geographic change.
40

41 Brenner asked if the Council has the option of extending this with the
42 provision that the proponents have to meet current tree retention language.
43

44 McShane stated the County Council can require increased regulations. The
45 code is clear on that.
46

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Brenner stated she doesn't like the idea of denying the request after all the
2 proponents have been through. The Council can compromise by imposing the tree
3 retention regulations.
4

5 Fleetwood asked if imposing conditions with new environmental standards is
6 the same as denying the request. Middleton stated he doesn't know the answer.
7 The changes to the Point Roberts special district identified Lily Point as an area for
8 tree retention.
9

10 McShane stated his reason for denial is not due to changed conditions. The
11 criteria for granting extensions is not met. The people did a lot of hard work, but
12 they didn't have the money to go through it. One backer died in 1996, and they
13 couldn't find anyone else to invest in the project. Several investors have died.
14 They mentioned September 11, 2001 as the reason for the extension. That was
15 two years ago. They can't find an investor, and are still trying to sell the project to
16 someone. The people who did the original work are no longer involved. The
17 extenuating circumstances are not different from circumstances that anyone else
18 with a proposal would have.
19

20 Fleetwood asked if they could table this to find out if the Council can
21 condition the request with the new requirements.
22

23 Brenner stated a lot of work was done on this. It could help the economy in
24 Point Roberts. September 11, 2001 had a lot and is still having a lot of effects on
25 peoples lives. Legally, anyone is allowed to do this. It sounds like the proponents
26 want to move forward with this thing. No one loses by giving the proponents an
27 extra year.
28

29 Crawford stated he agreed with Councilmember McShane about the new
30 conditions. On Geneva Hills, the development standards had to meet the current
31 development standards, as a condition of the extension.
32

33 McShane stated the Council discussed that issue, but chose not to do that.
34 In that instance, he was convinced there were extenuating circumstances.
35

36 Caskey-Schreiber stated she is against the motion. The proponents knew
37 when the PUD was to expire, and filed for a last-minute extension. If the project
38 was at all viable, the proponents should have been able to get this off the ground
39 during the recent period of low interest rates. If the proponents bought the area
40 twelve years ago, they will still be alright. Let it develop to the current zoning.
41

42 ***Motion failed 1-2 with Fleetwood in favor.***
43

44 McShane suggested councilmembers review County Code section
45 20.85.355(3) if they want to add additional criteria to the development.
46
47

1
2 **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**
3

4 **1. DISCUSSION OF AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO THE**
5 **INTRODUCTION CHAPTER OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY**
6 **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (AB2003-075A)**
7

8 Matt Aamot, Senior Planner, read from his PowerPoint presentation (*on file*).
9

10 McShane asked what the County does if a city does not make efforts to
11 incorporate growing populations. Aamot stated the City of Bellingham looked at
12 the value of the house and property to determine when it might be redeveloped.
13 There was a methodology they went through. They projected the anticipated
14 number of units that can be built in the city based on that methodology.
15

16 McShane asked if it applies to urban growth areas, or if cities can make
17 zoning changes within the cities to accommodate concerns about population
18 growth. Aamot stated they can. They can increase density inside the city.
19

20 Brenner asked the County's legal obligation or right to use consistent
21 population projections. Aamot stated the planners have been coordinating through
22 the Growth Management Oversight Committee. Some of the Cities have passed
23 resolutions adopting those measures. All the mayors of the small cities wrote
24 letters supporting it. It may require joint legislative meetings if the various
25 jurisdictions can't agree. If they don't have consistent comprehensive plans, there
26 could be challenges to the Growth Management Hearings Board. He invited the
27 cities to come to the Planning Commission meetings. Further coordination may
28 need to occur through joint meetings. They may need a better defined process for
29 coordination in the future.
30

31 County growth rates have mirrored, but been higher than, the State's growth
32 rates. In the 1970's, there was a recession in California, and people discovered
33 Whatcom County. He continued to read from his PowerPoint presentation.
34

35 It is difficult to create population projections. The 1992 and 1995
36 demographers were about 50 percent right, according to the 2000 census. The
37 Office of Financial Management (OFM) rationale for the larger population projection
38 range for 2022 is because there is uncertain population growth in Washington State
39 in the near term and the long term because of economic layoffs and ramifications of
40 the events of September 11, 2001.
41

42 The County, cities, and Port of Bellingham hired EcoNorthwest to refine these
43 projections and make its own projections. The OFM does not break down its
44 projections for cities, urban growth areas, or other study areas. EcoNorthwest
45 broke down the projections into those categories. They had an emphasis on future
46 economic conditions as a driver for projections. The OFM looks at births, deaths,
47 migration using set rates.

1
2 Crawford asked why they project the population growth to slow in the next
3 20 years. Aamot stated part of the reason is that with higher numbers of people,
4 they need higher annual increases in people to maintain that percentage.
5 EcoNorthwest thinks that the economic conditions will slow in the near term. The
6 OFM thinks the Washington State economy will outperform other parts of the U.S.
7 in the long-term. A big part of in-migration and out-migration are the available
8 jobs.

9
10 Roy asked if there are documents that go into that aspect in more detail.
11 She'd like to see that breakdown. Aamot stated there are.

12
13 Brenner stated that information is in the Council packet.

14
15 Aamot continued to read from his PowerPoint presentation.

16
17 Roy asked if the OFM projection regarding the aging population includes in-
18 migration of older people. Aamot stated he believes it does. The rate of people
19 over 65 is growing at a faster rate in Whatcom County than in other areas.

20
21 Aamot continued to read the Executive and Planning and Development
22 Services Department recommendations from his PowerPoint presentation.

23
24 Caskey-Schreiber asked if the small cities' recommendation of the high
25 projection is related to their own growth restrictions and infrastructure. Aamot
26 stated those are important issues. Their capital facilities populations are supposed
27 to plan for the anticipated population. This is a 20-year projection. The City of
28 Lynden is trying to get a contract for water. It will be something they have to plan
29 for. Staff presented the Planning Commission with five population projection
30 alternatives.

31
32 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*

33
34 Aamot continued to read from the PowerPoint presentation.

35
36 Caskey-Schreiber stated zoning determines what happens with the land, not
37 whether they put a high or medium population projection.

38
39 Fleetwood stated the zoning entitles people to live there. Aamot stated it is
40 about what people are willing to do based on cost.

41
42 Caskey-Schreiber stated that when they have a high population projection,
43 they require enough UGA land to support it. The expansion of the UGA is what
44 goes into the areas they are trying to protect. Aamot stated there needs to be
45 balance to accommodate population. Cities have had issues about raising density.
46

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Brenner asked for more complete information on building permit activity in
2 all the cities.

3
4 Aamot continued with his PowerPoint presentation. The Planning
5 Commission had a few different trains of thought. One thought was that they want
6 the high projection because they need to plan for the growth that will occur. If
7 they don't, the quality of life will deteriorate.

8
9 Another train of thought by the Planning Commission was to have a medium
10 to low projection because they need to get a handle on growth, and continued high
11 growth will result in the deterioration of quality of life.

12
13 A third group wanted the medium projection simply because they thought it
14 would be the most accurate.

15
16 A motion for the high projection failed at the Planning Commission on a
17 three-to-five vote. A motion for the medium projection passed. The Commission
18 gave the staff direction to come up with alternatives for allocating the projected
19 growth among the cities and rural areas. Staff provided five alternatives. The
20 Planning Commission selected alternative one, which is described in his PowerPoint
21 presentation. The Growth Management Oversight Committee took some of the
22 projected population growth away from the rural areas and raised the projections
23 for the cities. The EcoNorthwest high projection assumed a more rapid growth in
24 rural areas because that has happened in the past. The estimate for Birch Bay is
25 different from what is coming forward in the Birch Bay subarea plan. The estimate
26 for 'other unincorporated' areas constitutes an increase of about 5,200 over 20
27 years, compared to an increase of about 9,000 people in that area over a ten-year
28 period during the 1990's. That could be a cause for concern.

29
30 Nelson asked if the cities considered infrastructure capacity, such as water.

31
32 Sylvia Goodwin, Planning Division Manager, stated they are working on the
33 Bellingham urban fringe plan. Infrastructure capacity is being updated as part of
34 that plan. Staff wants additional input sooner to finish the plan. They want to
35 know what population projection plan they are shooting for. All of the cities are
36 required to look at capital facilities and infrastructure.

37
38 Nelson asked if cities can provide the services for the high estimates.
39 Goodwin stated the cities are projecting that they will be able to. Some don't have
40 water rights and still have things pending. The cities are assuming they will
41 develop the infrastructure that they don't have now. The cities can't say they have
42 capacity now, but can develop the capacity within the 20-year timeframe.

43
44 Fleetwood asked if the Council is going to approve one population projection
45 number, or a breakdown city by city. Goodwin stated the numbers are broken
46 down by city.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 When the committee makes a decision, it must decide to uphold the Planning
2 Commission decision or hold a public hearing. The Planning Commissioners will
3 have an opportunity to speak if the Council strays from the Planning Commission
4 recommendation.
5

6 Pat Jones, Jones Engineers Inc., stated his firm did a land supply and
7 population growth analysis for the County and City of Bellingham two years ago.
8 Since 1965, his firm has engaged in population projections for cities, counties, port
9 districts, and water and sewer districts throughout the Pacific Northwest. He's
10 developed different models for analyzing population projections than those
11 employed by EcoNorthwest. Theirs is a job-related model. His is not. After several
12 months of analysis, independent of other studies, he concluded that the population
13 growth is 2.21 percent. That is close to the 2.1 percent that staff recommends.
14

15 He attended all the Planning Commission meetings. His studies are part of
16 that public record. His impression from the Planning Commissioners was that if
17 they do not plan for people, the people will not come. That is illogical.
18

19 David Davidson, City of Sumas Administrator, stated cities engage constantly
20 in planning for facilities. Comprehensive plans are mandated to be updated at
21 regular intervals. That is predicated on the notion that growth occurs and facilities
22 need to be updated over time.
23

24 The Sumas sewer was built in 1982, and capacity was exhausted in 1997. It
25 needed to find an alternative route. The alternative was accomplished at a low
26 cost. However, they are still paying the bond payments for the sewer plant it is not
27 using. Everson is in a similar situation. They'd like to look at a high projection to
28 plan and finance a facility that can meet capacity.
29

30 There are two components to urban growth areas, population projection and
31 density for the final area. Facilities planning is important for the density issue. It is
32 a separate issue. They should be talking about appropriate densities. The
33 population projections drive the water and sewer comprehensive plans.
34

35 Roland Harper, Sehome Planning Services for the City of Nooksack, stated he
36 was of one mind with Mr. Aamot's recommendation. That's why they weren't at the
37 Planning Commission. Their opinion was represented by Mr. Aamot.
38

39 The high population projection appears to be the same as the current growth
40 level. The rate of growth in the 1997 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan was
41 about two percent. When planners look at the EcoNorthwest projections, the high
42 projection is consistent. For the small cities especially, even the high projection is
43 lower than what has been planned for merely six years ago. He submitted basic
44 population growth rate comparisons for each of the small cities, Bellingham, and
45 Whatcom County. The EcoNorthwest high projection represents a slowing of
46 growth rates.
47

1 Crawford stated Mr. Aamot's response to that issue was that the amount of
2 growth as a percentage drops as populations grow bigger. He asked if Mr. Harper
3 feels that explanation is sufficient to justify the lower numbers that are being
4 discussed. Harper stated that is a true explanation of exponential growth.
5 However, that doesn't mean they won't have exponential growth where larger
6 numbers of people do come into the area.

7
8 Crawford asked if the rate of change of the percentage itself does not bear
9 out in lower percentage numbers. They can forecast overall trends using the rate
10 of change of growth. Harper stated it's more appropriate to express growth as a
11 single average annual growth rate that has been true over a 20-year period.
12 Sometimes growth is not linear. A larger mass of people attracts more people.
13 That is exponential growth. His estimates have used exponential growth. He used
14 the average annual growth.

15
16 Small cities are basing the use of the high number based on what they see
17 happening. There is a lot of growth happening in the cities. It seems appropriate
18 to not arbitrarily veer away from the growth rates established in the
19 Comprehensive Plan six years ago. If they haven't planned for enough ability to
20 accommodate population, it will put pressure on rural sprawl. With the exception of
21 Bellingham, none of the areas are asking for urban growth expansions. They are
22 not talking about expanding urban sprawl in the small cities. There is enough land
23 to accommodate growth in the high numbers.

24
25 Brenner asked why it matters what the projection is, unless they cut the
26 urban growth area. She asked if the projection they use is a big deal if they
27 already have the area. Harper stated there are trickledown effects on all capital
28 planning. It might mean there is less planning for infrastructure, transportation, or
29 other services. There must be consistency between city and County plans required
30 by the State.

31
32 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.)*

33
34 Jorge Vega, City of Bellingham Planning Director, stated prior planning
35 prevents poor performance. They advocate the high numbers so they can be
36 prepared for the growth that may come. They don't have to implement for the high
37 numbers, just be ready for them. The City of Bellingham must meet Growth
38 Management Act requirements to not sprawl into the county. The City of
39 Bellingham belongs to Whatcom County. The city needs to grow and infill so it
40 doesn't have to sprawl into the county.

41
42 Historically, they had 1,900 new people each year in the 1990's. The
43 numbers dropped slightly in the 2000's. The Planning Commission numbers is
44 1,581 people per year. That number doesn't match historically. It is more difficult
45 to justify changes in the way Bellingham grows with lower population estimates.
46 The cities are looking at these numbers because they have to make important

1 decisions that need support, which is needed to get the infill requirements met. If
2 they use the high numbers, they have nothing to lose.
3

4 Caskey-Schreiber stated planners and city administrators should plan for the
5 worst case scenario. She asked how they contain urban growth areas (UGA's), and
6 if they will inevitably bump up against each other. Vega stated the County Council
7 will make that decision. They are working to see the amount of land they need for
8 the higher numbers. Once they decide, that's it. That's the amount of land that is
9 available. They have to work with that amount of land. The problem with UGA's is
10 that there are a lot of wetlands. The City is trying to figure out how to make up for
11 the wetlands. If they have the high population projection number, they can
12 determine the appropriate UGA and make it work. That makes it easier for him to
13 go to the City administration and convince them to infill the UGA's.
14

15 Caskey-Schreiber stated people will come forward and give that high
16 population estimate as the reason to approve their Comprehensive Plan
17 amendment or UGA expansion. They want to prepare for the worst case scenario,
18 but not sprawl unnecessarily. Vega stated a population growth of 1,900 people per
19 year is the reality.
20

21 Crawford asked if the UGA becomes a determination of land area and density
22 within that land area. He asked if the City is prepared to infill within current
23 boundaries rather than have its UGA's expanded. Vega stated the City Planning
24 Department wants a balance. The City won't build 40-story towers in downtown
25 Bellingham. The public won't stand for it. However, it may be able to build eight-
26 or ten-story towers to do infill. In the last year, they've been able to increase the
27 numbers of apartments in the downtown area by over 400, due to a tax exemption
28 program. That is a decided effort by the City of Bellingham to increase density,
29 which it can do in the downtown area. There is a recommendation to have a 12-
30 block area in the lettered streets area rezoned for a commercial overlay district,
31 with the possibility of bringing in multi-family buildings. That is a change. There is
32 a great deal of opposition. In order to preserve the rural areas and follow the
33 Growth Management Act, they have to build up.
34

35 Crawford asked if it is acceptable to the City of Bellingham Planning
36 Department to have a built-up downtown core, a lower density area around the
37 core that is already developed with single family homes, and a UGA ring around
38 that area has the density packed into it. Vega stated he's not sure that is good
39 planning. The reality is that the City is already doing its part to see about changing
40 zoning. They are working with the County to determine what the zoning ought to
41 be in the UGA.
42

43 McShane stated they may see things occur in between those areas.
44 Economics change. In larger cities to the south, single family homes are knocked
45 down and replaced with high-rise condos. The economics will make that work. It
46 won't work economically now, but it will down the road.
47

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Roy stated that is happening in Birch Bay.
2

3 Vega stated the issue is not to decide today, but to decide whether or not to
4 accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission or allow additional
5 discussion by recommending a hearing. He asked the Council to have a hearing so
6 he can provide more information.
7

8 Tom Black, City of Ferndale Planning and Building Director, stated he
9 supports the process that had been conducted previously with the Growth
10 Management Oversight Committee and work with EcoNorthwest. Ferndale has a bit
11 of a problem with the idea of developing population projections. Ferndale doesn't
12 have the money to hire the people to do that, which is why it cooperated with the
13 cities, Port of Bellingham, and County to hire a contractor to do the work for
14 everyone. The City of Ferndale had some concern that the numbers were too low.
15 EcoNorthwest did not factor in things it should have been, that were more empirical
16 and difficult to get data on. This is the best science that can be done on this issue
17 right now. Anyone who has worked in planning for awhile knows that this kind of
18 predictive science is notoriously accurate. As an advisor to the Ferndale City
19 Council and Ferndale citizens, he agrees with Mr. Vega. Do not assume a lower
20 population growth than will actually occur, and do not plan with low numbers. If
21 they are going to make a mistake in this area, make it on the side of too high
22 population projections. The Ferndale City Council adopted the EcoNorthwest high
23 population projection. They also acknowledged that they will look at trends as they
24 go along, and decide if the numbers need to be increased. If there are other
25 factors that will influence population growth, they will adjust their planning to
26 accommodate that added growth.
27

28 Bob Tull, Attorney, stated he represents a bunch of people in the City of
29 Bellingham where densification is drawing opposition from citizen groups. It is very
30 difficult to densify existing neighborhoods. They also want to control sprawl. In
31 the end, people told the Planning Commission that there are thousands of existing
32 parcels currently in the unincorporated areas of Whatcom County. If the cities
33 don't succeed in densifying and attracting their share of the population growth,
34 then it will sprawl out into those thousands and thousands of parcels. In theory,
35 they can prohibit building permits. However, they may have a constitutional taking
36 and a revolt. The other alternative is for the County or others to purchase
37 development rights from the rural areas. He recommended that the councils and
38 planners of the various jurisdictions figure out how they are going to have the cities
39 take at least the share of growth they need to when neighborhoods don't like to
40 have internal change. Densify certain existing areas such as downtown. Then, do
41 development that attracts people. If the cities don't or can't attract the population
42 increase, those parcels in the unincorporated areas will still be available.
43

44 McShane asked the typical devaluation before it is considered a taking. Tull
45 stated more than 50 percent. One hundred percent is the devaluation they'd have
46 with a building permit prohibition.
47

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 McShane stated he often hears elected officials throw out takings and due
2 process arguments without thinking about it. He appreciated Mr. Tull's comments.
3 He asked about a transfer of development rights (TDR) program for rural areas.
4 Areas in a UGA that are not zoned to urban level of density may play a role to have
5 development rights transferred into them. Growth would provide benefit to the
6 rural areas of the county by purchasing those development rights or conservation
7 easements. Tull stated the County had a consultant on TDR's. They put together
8 the most realistic appreciation of what TDR's are about. It's still a difficult thing to
9 pull off. It's safe to say some role will be created, in Bellingham in particular, for
10 TDR's in connection with development in new areas. It's going to require
11 embracing growth management. They've reached a much higher level of City and
12 County cooperation. It's more likely they will master some of the challenges of the
13 UGA and utility services.
14

15 Brenner states she sees humungous mansions on the five-acre parcels in the
16 county. She doesn't see a lot of people buying those parcels because they can't
17 afford to be in Bellingham. People buy those parcels because that's the way they
18 want to live. They can't change that by providing more UGA. They can change it
19 by changing the zoning and buying up development rights. Tull stated the reality is
20 that there are some people who want acreage, and others who just want a big
21 house. Also, there are people who aren't building big houses on those parcels.
22 During the most recent Planning Commission meeting, people talked about the
23 substantial cost differences between developing in the city and county.
24

25 Jack Petree, stated there are enough parcels in the county to accept all the
26 population that will come. The question is how they are going to steer the growing
27 population to the places where they should go. It's simple mathematically. One
28 hundred parcels in the city will consume six or eight acres of land. One hundred
29 homes outside the city is two to five acres per home. The U.S. Department of
30 Agriculture (USDA) concluded that growth immediately adjacent to the cities has a
31 minor impact on agriculture. The problem is the constant sprawling into the other
32 areas. They cannot encourage people to buy smaller parcels in the city by forcing
33 the cities to undersupply the land. In addition to the mansions, there are also a lot
34 of mobile homes. They've forced people to build on the inexpensive land, which is
35 miles and miles from work.
36

37 Caskey-Schreiber stated this is not an either-or issue. One of the biggest
38 population increases will be from people above the age of 65. Those people don't
39 want to live in unincorporated areas. They want services. Part of her dilemma is
40 that they are obligated to provide services in UGA's. It's a fiscal responsibility the
41 County has. Petree stated those mansions on five-acre parcels are being built by
42 retired farmers and people who come into the county. Whatcom County is in the
43 middle in terms of the population percent that is aged 60 and above. Half the
44 counties have higher aging populations and half have lower.
45

46 Brenner stated it's not about how they compare to other counties. The
47 demographics are changing to an older population. She doesn't disagree with Mr.

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 Petree's comments. Those parcels are in the rural areas. If people are enticed to
2 Bellingham, at some point all those rural parcels will fill up because they're there.
3 She doesn't see that they are going to solve that problem. Petree stated
4 constraining the cities just hastens that day.
5

6 Roy stated they are mixing apples and oranges. They are supposed to be
7 talking about population projections, not UGA expansions. For some people, it is
8 hard to separate those issues. The testimony today has helped her separate the
9 issue. The issue is population projections. UGA's and how that population is
10 distributed is related, but it is not today's topic.
11

12 **McShane moved** to amend Council packet page 232, Comprehensive Plan
13 page 1-11, "To avoid tightening urban land supply and raising housing costs, the
14 county and the cities agree to use the ~~is using a projection of 231,928~~ 261,048 for
15 land use and facility planning purposes, and to plan to provide urban growth
16 boundaries that accommodate a land supply at least 50% greater than the
17 anticipated need." The EcoNorthwest high projection is appropriate. He is open to
18 the idea of the cities using the high number. He is curious if the County, in the
19 unincorporated, non-UGA's, should use the low number. He questions the capacity
20 of the County to meet the service demands for those rural areas. There are serious
21 problems in those low numbers, and then add even more population to the cities.
22 He doesn't like the idea of the language about accommodating land supply. It
23 points to UGA's too much. UGA's are part of it, but not all of it. they also need to
24 consider zoning and economics. Also, facility planning becomes a big issue and
25 should be included. **He withdrew his motion** because he wants to hear from staff
26 about using a low number for the non-UGA areas of the county and increasing the
27 number for the cities on the pro-rated basis. However, that is the direction he
28 would like the Council to go. The committee, at the next meeting, should go with
29 that language, and schedule a public hearing.
30

31 **McShane moved** to request that Planning staff prepare and provide a
32 Chapter I that includes the language in his motion plus the low number for the non-
33 UGA portions of unincorporated Whatcom County.
34

35 **Fleetwood moved** to table the motion. People aren't ready to vote on that
36 yet.
37

38 **Motion to table carried unanimously.**
39

40 **OTHER BUSINESS**

41
42
43 Kurt Baumgarten, Planner I, stated he has a follow up to prior
44 correspondence from him that is trying to head off anticipated problems with
45 bringing in an ordinance that would be retroactively effective. At the present rate
46 they are going, the seasonal land clearing element of the Title 20 changes would
47 come in after the wet season has already begun. Last year when this happened,

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 there was not enough time for the public and staff to understand the new
2 requirements. He proposed a time period to phase in or provide a grace period.
3

4 Caskey-Schreiber asked if they can agree to delay implementation until
5 January 1, and then discuss it at the next committee meeting. Baumgarten stated
6 there is a time period between one and three months to get financing and schedule
7 contractors.
8

9 Fleetwood stated a one to three month phased implementation approach is
10 not a problem for him.
11

12 Caskey-Schreiber stated she didn't agree with implementation before
13 January 1.
14

15 McShane stated he could go longer than January 1 if necessary.
16

17 Baumgarten stated January 1 would work.
18

19 The committee concurred.
20
21

22 **ADJOURN**
23

24 The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 p.m.
25
26

27 _____
28 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription
29
30

31 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

32
33
34
35
36 _____
37 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Seth Fleetwood, Committee Chair