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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Planning and Development Committee

October 7, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 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
Barbara Brenner
Sharon Roy
Ward Nelson

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING IMPACT FEES (AB2003-331)

This item will be rescheduled at a later date.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – COMP. PLAN

1. ORDINANCE ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO THE INTRODUCTION CHAPTER OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (AB2003-075A) (3:00 – 4:00 P.M.)

Sylvia Goodwin, Planning Division Manager, stated the purpose of the population projections they're considering is to plan for infrastructure and land use in the future. The projections are what they expect to happen, and not what they want to happen. The County Council has some control over what is actually going to happen. A lot of the development patterns in the county was set in the 1960's and 1970's. Those zoning categories were confirmed in subarea plans in the 1970's and by the County Comprehensive Plan in 1997. At that time, the County Council and Planning Commission were property rights oriented. They did not do downzones.

She submitted information (*on file*) about the number of dwelling units that can be built with the existing zoning.

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1 McShane asked if the information is just for areas outside of the city limits.
2 Goodwin stated it is.

3
4 Within urban growth areas, there could be 54,998 additional dwelling units.
5 That accommodates 138,000 additional people. Outside the urban growth areas,
6 they can add another 20,000 dwelling units to accommodate an additional 50,000
7 people. Even if they were to downzone those areas, a lot of the parcels already
8 exist. Even a massive downzone in the county would not reduce the number of
9 potential dwelling units outside the cities.

10
11 Crawford asked if the figures are pure acreage, or take into account the non-
12 buildable lands. Goodwin stated she did not account for non-buildable land. They
13 have different infill projections within the cities comprehensive plans. In urban
14 growth areas, the wetlands and critical areas would remove a considerable amount
15 of land. Outside of urban growth areas, they won't. If there is five and ten acre
16 zoning, most parcels can fit one house even with a significant amount of wetlands.
17 Even if they assume that half or three-quarters of the land comes out of the total
18 due to wetlands, there is still a significant amount of development that could occur
19 under the current zoning. This information only accounts for what the zoning would
20 allow.

21
22 There are a few areas that are zoned for five acre zoning but are still
23 predominantly ten-acre parcels. Those areas are in a checkerboard pattern with
24 five-acre, two-acre, and smaller parcels. If the County downzoned those areas,
25 neighbors would be treated differently. They could reduce some density in certain
26 areas.

27
28 Brenner asked about the issue of treating one property owner different from
29 another property owner. She's never heard about that issue being brought up.
30 Goodwin stated it's been discussed throughout the Lake Samish rezone. Staff looks
31 at the existing development pattern and whether they are being equitable.

32
33 Those are things the County Council should think about. Mostly, the purpose
34 was to point out the fact that a significant downzone would not reduce a lot of
35 density. If they do want to go with a slower growth projection in the rural areas,
36 there are a few options to achieve that slower growth.

37
38 Brenner asked the incentive of the cities if the county can't reduce its
39 density. Goodwin stated they weren't around when the zoning was established.
40 They have to deal with the situation as it exists now. Now, the county has a lot of
41 growth in the rural areas. They need to find creative ways to get the urban growth
42 areas to densify and to discourage people from going to the rural areas.

43
44 One way to discourage growth in the rural areas is downzoning. Another
45 option is to adopt impact fees in the rural areas. Impact fees across the rural areas
46 would make those areas more expensive to develop. The cities would be more
47 attractive to develop. They all have impact fees right now. Impact fees in the

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1 county would level the playing field. They have put a moratorium on gift
2 exemptions. By tightening up the gift exemption procedures, there will be fewer
3 five-acre parcels divided from the big parcels. They've talked about the transfer of
4 development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs.
5 They have to have receiving areas to transfer density to certain locations, which
6 means they have to resolve issues in the Bellingham urban fringe to get utilities
7 extended to those areas. They've talked about wetland mitigation banking and
8 other things that encourage development in the city to mitigate wetlands outside
9 the city. They've also talked about land acquisition programs and easements. All
10 of those options are expensive. Buying development rights is expensive. The
11 County may be able to afford three agricultural parcels this year. There are things
12 to do to help the cities make development more attractive in the city areas.

13
14 Fleetwood stated they always acknowledge that there are things to do to
15 influence growth. He asked why they pronounce that they can't do anything about
16 it. Goodwin stated there are things they can do. With this many existing parcels
17 already on the books, there is only so many the County can purchase. The County
18 can't just take them without compensation. The County can only downzone the
19 ones that are larger than the minimum parcel size or it does no good. The County
20 may be able to eliminate one-quarter to one-half of the parcels in the rural areas
21 through downzoning and other means, but there are still many out there that are
22 likely to develop. Whether or not they plan for the growth and provide
23 infrastructure, it's likely there will be people on a lot of those parcels.

24
25 She displayed a map of parcels that could be further subdivided under
26 current zoning. There are a lot of areas where the County could downzone and it
27 wouldn't make a difference. Some of the parcels that could be downzoned
28 effectively are in the urban growth areas, and others aren't. There are a lot of five-
29 and ten-acre zoned parcels larger than the minimum lot size south of Lynden, north
30 of Bellingham, and in the east side of the county. The point of the map is to show
31 that there are areas where downzoning could do some good if the Council wants to
32 project lower density in the rural areas and is willing to do downzones and deal with
33 the property rights challenges that are likely to occur. It's a difficult decision.

34
35 There are now eight alternatives for population projections. The projections
36 are important to know sooner rather than later. They have to make a decision on
37 the Birch Bay subarea plan. There's a difference between the 7,100 units
38 recommended by the Planning Commission and the 9,600 units recommended by
39 the community in the community plan. Staff is continuing to work on the
40 Bellingham urban fringe plan, which also depends on the population projections.

41
42 McShane asked if the projection recommended by the Planning Commission
43 for Birch Bay for the total growth. Goodwin stated it is the potential population for
44 the year 2020. The community wants to plan for 9,600. The Planning Commission
45 recommended 7,100, which is what they want to plan and zone for.

46

1 Fleetwood stated Bellingham City Council Member Barbara Ryan is of the
2 opinion that the City Council has not reviewed this issue, and thinks it has
3 implications on how Bellingham will grow. The committee is going to hear a
4 request to delay the process a little bit. He asked why they cannot wait. Goodwin
5 stated they can wait. The Bellingham City Council has not taken action on the
6 population projection. The Mayor made a suggestion, and the City staff made a
7 suggestion. Tabling the decision on this item means they are also tabling the
8 adoption of the Birch Bay Community Plan and a lot of the work the cities and
9 County are trying to do to update comprehensive plans.

10
11 Fleetwood asked the practical implication of delaying the process. Goodwin
12 stated it would save her work if the Council makes a recommendation. She can put
13 that work on the back burner. There are a lot of citizens who are waiting to get it
14 down. The staff is hoping to have an estimate of how the Lake Whatcom downzone
15 effects the future population and the TDR programs. They all tie together. The
16 Council could wait. Ultimately, they can't adopt the population projections for the
17 Introduction Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan until the Council completes review
18 of the other Comprehensive Plan amendments later in the year. She would like to
19 suspend work on the Birch Bay plan rather than rewrite it if the projections change.

20
21 Fleetwood asked if the Council could indicate what it's willing to do to one
22 certain provisional area, such as Birch Bay. Goodwin stated she would appreciate
23 that. Staff was moving forward on the Bellingham urban growth area plan. It
24 looks like they might be moving more slowly on that plan as well.

25
26 McShane read a finding of fact 13 from the Growth Management Hearings
27 Board decision on the Lake Samish zoning change regarding the county's analysis
28 of housing needs, available potential lots, and population growth. Goodwin stated
29 that finding is accurate. It came from a table staff did in its geographic information
30 system (GIS) prior to this table. This build out analysis does not include the Lummi
31 reservation. According to the current table, there are 75,000 additional potential
32 dwelling units because they've subtracted Lake Samish, Lake Whatcom, and the
33 Lummi reservation.

34
35 McShane stated the ECONorthwest low projection is 43,650 additional
36 growth over the next 20 years. If the Council were to choose the low number,
37 that's how many people they need to plan for. The Council could conceivable take
38 half of that growth outside the urban growth boundaries. Goodwin stated they
39 could. If the zoning is left as it is, they could build an additional 20,000 units, to
40 accommodate 50,000 people outside the urban growth areas.

41
42 McShane stated they could plan to not build another house in the urban
43 growth areas or the cities, and they could accommodate the entire low population
44 projection growth in the rural parts of the county. The cities don't have to do a
45 thing. Goodwin stated that's correct if they can afford the facilities.

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1 Crawford asked what they are supposed to conclude from this information.
2 He asked if the inception of zoning inferred that a parcel was buildable. Goodwin
3 stated it did not.
4

5 Crawford stated that all the table does is takes the potential build out
6 according to the zoning, subtracts the number of units, and says they have a
7 phenomenal number left over. His concern is the reason why the existing dwelling
8 units are there is because they are the spots that were most amenable to some
9 form of construction. He doesn't understand how they can say there is a potential
10 for 20,000 more housing units. Common sense says there's no way they can build
11 out to what something is zoned. Goodwin stated that's true, but common sense
12 also says that there is a bunch of vacant parcels that exist. If someone wants to
13 build on them they could. The only point of the map is that they are not restricting
14 the growth if they project the low population projection. The lots are there. If the
15 people want to come there, they will. The map doesn't show that all those parcels
16 will develop, just that they could develop.
17

18 Crawford stated he would challenge the assumption that they could be built
19 on. Goodwin stated many don't have wells or septic tanks.
20

21 McShane stated it's important to address this issue. It now makes sense to
22 build on properties that weren't desirable before. People will be creative in their
23 designs and have to do a little extra engineering. It's happening in Bellingham
24 now. There are parcels in Bellingham that will be developed at a high density
25 because it finally works economically. The banks are lining up to loan the money.
26 The market forces will eventually drive people to build on lots if there is an
27 opportunity, through zoning, to build on the lots. It's not necessarily true that
28 people won't build on sites. People will figure out a way to do it. There aren't that
29 many lots that are unbuildable because people will figure out a way to build. That's
30 what the Ayers Consulting, Stratum Group, and many others do.
31

32 Crawford stated there's an area near Northwest and Aldrich roads that is
33 slated to have 500 homes. Every developer says there's no way more than three
34 houses can be built on that acreage. Much of it's wetlands that has to be mitigated
35 at a ratio of three to one. Councilmember McShane is saying that there will be a
36 point in time when someone will mitigate somewhere else, and actually put 500
37 homes there. Developers would challenge that statement.
38

39 McShane stated that's correct. It won't happen today. It may happen in 20
40 years.
41

42 Brenner stated it's important to stop demonizing people who live on small
43 acreages. She lives on two acres. People should have choices.
44

45 Caskey-Schreiber stated she tapped into Western Washington University's
46 demography department to help understand how the census gathers data, how
47 projections are made, and to provide a demography lesson. Dr. Rabel Burdge is an

1 expert in rural sociology, and is also on the Planning Commission. Dr. Kyle
2 Crowder is a well recognized demographer and has published on urban sociology.
3 Lucky Tedrow handles the census material for the State.
4

5 Dr. Rabel Burdge, 1108 - 13th Street, Bellingham, stated he lives on a 5,000
6 square foot lot. He submitted and read a handout (*on file*) on the Whatcom County
7 Population Projections, dated October 7, 2003.
8

9 Lucky Tedrow, 2433 Fieldview Drive, Ferndale, stated the ECONorthwest
10 projections uses economic links with the State data. The Office of Financial
11 Management (OFM) projection refers to a demographic method that projects age
12 cohorts over time. This is the method he's most familiar with. The demographic
13 methods separately accounts for births, deaths, and migration. Both the
14 ECONorthwest and OFM intermediate forecasts are similar. The State's
15 intermediate projection is the most likely to occur.
16

17 Migration is the most volatile component of the projection. The numbers of
18 births and deaths is standard throughout all counties. In the short term, from 2000
19 to 2005, the projection may go over or under the intermediate number, but it will
20 level out to the intermediate number over the course of the 22 year period. The
21 high and low projections reflect uncertainly and the fact that they can't forecast the
22 population growth exactly.
23

24 Kyle Crowder, Western Washington University Associate Professor in the
25 Sociology Department, stated he lives on a four-acre lot. Research has been done
26 in urban sociology to put population projections in context. There are three
27 questions that are often convoluted in this debate, but need to be separated to
28 reach sound decisions on which population projections they adopt.
29

30 First, the question is how much they think the county will grow. They've
31 already heard testimony that the middle projection is probably the most likely
32 projection in terms of the demographic and economic forecast. Projections are
33 based primarily on the fast growth of the 1990's. They've already seen the
34 economic growth sag since then in the state, nation, and county. Since economic
35 growth spurs in-migration, a sagging economy will also lead to sagging in-migration
36 and reduce that population growth level. It's more realistic to extend the view back
37 to at least the 1980's. The long-term view would lead to a conclusion that the
38 middle line projection offered by ECONorthwest are most consistent with what will
39 likely happen.
40

41 The highest population projection from ECONorthwest are divorced from the
42 reality of recent population trends. They imply that annual additions to the
43 population will be about 4,444 new residents per year. Percentages sometimes
44 hide the reality of what they're talking about. Every time they are talking about an
45 annual percentage increase, they are applying that percentage to a larger
46 population every year. The careful study by the Planning Commission supports the
47 recommendations by the Planning Commission.

1
2 The second question is how they will choose to accommodate the growth
3 that will occur. Ms. Goodwin presented good information on that topic. Regardless
4 of the population projections they decide to adopt, they will still have choices.
5

6 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*
7

8 Crowder continued to state that even though zoning is already established,
9 they still have room to mediate the potential impact of population growth. Adding
10 to existing urban growth areas or failing to rezone current areas that could have
11 high density development in the county paves the way for sprawl and its related
12 problems.
13

14 The third question is the most important, and asks how the planning
15 decisions impact patterns and levels of population growth. The decisions they
16 make shape the population trends. Planning is an active, not reactive, set of
17 strategies. Take into consideration the impacts that population projections will
18 have. For example, adopting inflated population projections and developing the
19 related infrastructure to accommodate that inflated growth will increase the pace of
20 population growth. Adopting high population projections, and increasing the
21 availability of land for development, lowers the economic costs of using these
22 resources and encourages more use, creating a phenomenon called induced usage.
23 Evidence is most clear when they look at the development of roads. They often
24 develop and expand roads to alleviate traffic congestion. Unfortunately, it's only a
25 short-run solution. Over the long-run, it lowers the cost of traveling by car,
26 induces more people to travel by car, and exacerbates the traffic congestion
27 problem. They can expand that same logic to other kinds of infrastructure. All
28 those provisions tend to reduce the cost of using those lands in the outer county
29 areas and pave the way for more development in those areas. If they adopt the
30 high projections, they are not wedded to measures that directly affect higher
31 densities or development in the outer county, but it will create pressure. If they
32 plan for a high population growth, that's what they will get because people will take
33 advantage of the infrastructure that they've developed.
34

35 He highly recommends that the Council adopt the Planning Commission's
36 recommendations. They are the best thought out and most consistent with the
37 trends. The variable projections across the county allow for steering growth into
38 areas that take advantage of existing infrastructure and avoid that self-fulfilling
39 prophecy.
40

41 McShane stated a lot of the population projection appears to be focused on
42 what's happening locally. He asked how well demographers do at predicting
43 population growth in communities that are 50 to 90 miles from large urban areas.
44 Crowder stated Seattle and Vancouver B.C. are both cases that contradict general
45 trends. They have both experienced certain inner-city problems that tend to fuel
46 suburbanization. They've also experienced a tremendous amount of gentrification
47 as well, such as in the central district of Seattle.

1
2 He's concerned that the cost of business that goes up very high in the cities
3 and creates an engine that drives population they can't prepare for. Crowder
4 stated the suburbanization process and decline of the central city are locked in a
5 downward spiral. There is a debate about whether or not the problems in the
6 central city are a cause or consequence of urban decline. The tax base of the
7 central city is declining because it is going to the suburbs. The businesses have
8 also taken their tax dollars. If they continually focus economic and infrastructure
9 development on the outer fringes of the urban areas, they are taking away funds
10 from the central city and worsening the problems people are reacting to already.
11

12 McShane stated the idea is that they should focus attention on the areas
13 they want to have growth occur, and then plan the infrastructure there. The
14 Planning Commission reflected that somewhat. His concern is how solid that
15 number is. They are running out of land because of decisions made between
16 Seattle and Everett. People are pressured to come this way. Crowder stated the
17 downtown core of Bellingham will change if they infill and build up densities. They
18 don't have to change in ways that other central cities have changed. In other
19 cities, densities exploded and made it impossible for businesses to adapt to the lack
20 of resources and land in the city. Whatcom County isn't at that point yet. They
21 have a long way to go before reaching the point where land is completely
22 unavailable in Bellingham.
23

24 If they take those resources away from the central city, they lose control
25 over the way the city develops. What's left is a tremendous infrastructure that's
26 underutilized because businesses and people have relocated to the suburban
27 fringes.
28

29 They should all think about how they view population projections as self-
30 fulfilling prophecies. Much of the super rapid growth reflects the fact they've been
31 planning for super rapid growth. It's tough to plan for less growth. It's a big risk,
32 but it's the only way to get a handle on it.
33

34 Fleetwood stated many people propose that they choose the high population
35 projection because it's better to be prepared, and it's extremely expensive to
36 retrofit because of poor planning. He asked for Mr. Crowder's comments on that
37 option. Crowder stated it seems to make good economic and common sense to
38 overbuild, but it reduces the cost of development, which will spur development and
39 population growth. At the other end of the extreme and under-build, it will
40 increase the cost of development so much that people can't afford to move in.
41 There won't be enough land and infrastructure to accommodate the people who
42 want to move in. The end result is that the population growth slows. Something
43 between the two extremes is ideal.
44

45 Crawford stated the question is whether or not growth is good. His
46 experience says that most people in the room were not born in Whatcom County.
47 He thought it was pretty cool that he could move here. It sounds like they're

1 saying growth and population increases are bad. He asked if people who desire to
2 come here should be able to come here. Burdge stated the purpose of their
3 presentation is to give the best technical estimate of what the population will be.
4 It's not their goal to decide whether growth is good or bad. Their presentation
5 doesn't imply that growth is bad. They're simply saying that, based on their
6 technical knowledge and experience, the Planning Commission recommendation is
7 the best estimate. It's the Council's decision to evaluate the value of growth.
8

9 Tedrow stated they have to make a distinction between population growth
10 and geographic growth. By definition, sprawl is geographic growth that outstrips
11 population growth. Population growth is good. That's what's allowed people to
12 move here. Geographic growth is bad for the health of the cities, suburbs, and
13 county in terms of attracting businesses and the environmental health. Population
14 growth is possible without geographic spread. The Council has an opportunity to
15 help steer that population growth into areas that are healthy for the entire county.
16

17 Brenner stated the Growth Management Act can be interpreted many ways.
18 It does talk about urban growth areas. People don't want to be in urban growth
19 areas. She asked a better way than incrementally increasing the urban growth
20 areas. Tedrow stated the urban growth areas are a good idea in principle. It's a
21 matter of how they use the urban growth areas and whether or not they can avoid
22 adding to the urban growth areas. They can argue there is ample area for
23 development within the existing urban growth areas. Steering growth to those
24 existing areas is what he would prescribe.
25

26 Roy stated the notion is deciding what they want to preserve ahead of time,
27 during the planning process, so the government and community have already
28 determined the areas that will be green spaces, natural resources, or other uses.
29 She asked if there's a pattern for how to do that. Tedrow stated that's a matter of
30 being proactive instead of reactive. Have those philosophical conversations that
31 tend to get lost in the day-to-day operations.
32

33 Caskey-Schreiber asked about Councilmember McShane's proposal of
34 choosing high projections for the cities and low projections for the rural areas, and
35 whether that will work. Burdge stated Ms. Goodwin will provide information on
36 what's available within these areas.
37

38 Caskey-Schreiber stated it's difficult to divorce the population projection
39 from the land use issues. The City of Bellingham is far from using all the tools
40 available to encourage infill. They need to make it more attractive and competitive
41 for people to locate in the city versus the county. They can do that. They don't
42 need to adopt the high projection to get there.
43

44 Fleetwood stated finding of fact 13 in the ordinance mirrors a finding of fact
45 in the Planning Commission recommendation. It is what Councilmember McShane
46 proposes.
47

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1 McShane stated his proposal is not far from the Planning Commission's
2 proposal. They should choose the highest number for the cities to make sure the
3 cities are putting in place the infrastructure necessary to accommodate as much
4 growth as possible. He's worried about more than 20 years.
5

6 Nelson stated that if the land supply is adequate and the costs are down,
7 they won't force people into the rural area.
8

9 David Hunter, 819 Mason Street, stated he lives on a 5,500 square foot lot.
10 He is not speaking as a representative of the County Planning Commission. It's
11 important to recognize that a population projection is not purely reactive. It's
12 proactive. It matters what they project. Increased population is not purely benign.
13 It's damaging. It causes damage to the natural resources, even if it all occurs in
14 the cities. The population in the cities will still transport to the county. They will
15 still send pollution out into the county and affect the water supply. Recognize that
16 the projections will have an impact on actual growth. Contemplate the special
17 character of Whatcom County, with remarkable natural resources. Consider that
18 low projections will have an impact that is different from a medium or a higher
19 impact. Don't consider anything higher than the recommendation from the
20 Planning Commission, including projections for the cities. The problems with
21 shellfish and salmon are harbingers of future problems. Consider the Planning
22 Commission recommendation, or something even lower.
23

24 Barbara Ryan, Bellingham City Council Member, stated the Bellingham City
25 Council and the City Planning Commission have not been able to have the same
26 discussion as the County Council is having today. The City would like an
27 opportunity to look at the numbers, and at how much growth the city can handle
28 before it's not livable. Another question is what they can do to mitigate the
29 impacts of growth. She is concerned about the increase of population without
30 annexation. The City has looked at the areas that depend on City services that
31 aren't part of the city and aren't paying City taxes. They have more work to do on
32 that analysis. They are also interested in areas inside the city that are capable of
33 becoming more dense, but they don't know what the numbers are. They need to
34 analyze those areas. They need to figure out what they want Bellingham to look
35 like in 2020. The City Council asks that the County delay the decision until the City
36 has an opportunity to ask their questions.
37

38 Fleetwood asked if the City knows how much time it needs to come to their
39 position. Ryan stated she doesn't know. It needs to be done soon.
40

41 Crawford asked for staff's response.
42

43 Hal Hart, Planning and Development Services Director, stated the
44 administration was disappointed when it heard this, but understands.
45

46 Crawford asked if they can delay this portion of the Comprehensive Plan
47 update. This item carries a lot of weight. Bellingham is the largest city and

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1 contains about half the county's population. It will have a major influence on what
2 the County does. Goodwin stated they could delay this decision as long as to the
3 end of 2004 if necessary. However, in order to plan for infill in Bellingham and
4 growth in the urban growth area, staff need a projection on how much growth to
5 plan for. County staff has worked with City staff on the Bellingham urban growth
6 area. County staff recently heard that Bellingham staff wants to stop work on the
7 Bellingham urban growth area plan and work on the city plan instead. If they try to
8 wait until after they get done with the Bellingham urban growth area plan, it could
9 be years. It's difficult for the city to plan for additional density if they don't have a
10 population projection. It's easier for the city to plan for low projections, not infill,
11 and let the growth go elsewhere if there isn't a projection to work toward. The
12 County is required to update its Comprehensive Plan by the end of 2004.

13
14 Caskey-Schreiber asked that someone from the City Council tell the County
15 its timeline. The County can work with the City. It doesn't have to wait for a year.
16 Hopefully they can get it done within the next couple of meetings.

17
18 Dan Warner, 3854 Squalicum Lake Road, stated they all agree that they
19 don't want to be another King County. At the present rate of growth, the City of
20 Bellingham will have a population of 1.5 million in 100 years. That population is
21 not acceptable or sustainable. It's a political decision. The people of Whatcom
22 County have a right to say what they want the County to be like. At some
23 juncture, the county population has got to stop growing. Of course the Council
24 doesn't have the power to do that. Begin to take the action to stop growth sooner
25 rather than later.

26
27 Pat Jones, 153 Soundview Road, submitted information for the record (*on*
28 *file*). He came to Whatcom County from Bellevue. He understands the
29 consequences of not planning for the right population. As a consulting engineer, he
30 saw it. He introduced two members of Northern Economics, who did a report for
31 his firm a year ago.

32
33 Donna Macomber, 159 Larson Road, Bellingham, asked the Council to use
34 the low population forecast. Don't make judgments and decisions because they
35 can't predict the future. The population decreased in Whatcom County last year. If
36 they use the high forecast, the UGA will be increased. The builders will have more
37 land, and taxpayers will pay higher taxes to subsidize them. The County has to
38 review this again in seven years. If the Council chooses the high projection, the
39 developers will be back in seven years to ask for more land in the UGA. Let
40 Bellingham's current UGA do what it is supposed to do, which is infill.

41
42 Tamer Kirac, Northern Economics Inc., stated he lives on a sailboat in
43 Squalicum Harbor Marina. He did not specifically work on the report Mr. Jones
44 submitted to the Council. Because of his background in economics and
45 demographics, he may be able to provide some useful information and answer
46 questions. Having worked for numerous counties, cities, and the Department of
47 Commerce, he had a chance to review and critique some of the population

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1 projections that OFM conducts. The methodology used by OFM are quite credible
2 and accurate. The OFM projections probably reflect reality and performance of
3 actual population attainment in many counties and cities. Underestimating
4 population growth in cities the size of Bellingham result in spillover of population.
5 The UGA was established to manage that growth. Two communities that would be
6 affected by such spillover would be Lynden and Ferndale. Underestimation can be
7 a problem that would be difficult to solve in the future. Decisions should be made
8 very carefully.

9
10 Dave Paulsen, 3310 - 32nd Street, Bellingham, submitted his letter into the
11 record (*on file*). He read his letter.

12
13 (*Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.*)

14
15 Paulsen continued to read his letter into the record. There are ways to grow
16 in a sustainable way, create living wage jobs that increase the quality of life in
17 Bellingham and Whatcom County.

18
19 Kenni Merritt, 1304-39th Street, Bellingham, stated she believes there is a
20 strong common thread running through the community. Citizens want to preserve
21 the rural character, farmland, and open space; the character of established
22 neighborhoods, and; the special qualities and appearance of the community. These
23 goals can be achieved if they use the low population number, retain existing urban
24 growth area (UGA) boundaries, and retain the current zoning.

25
26 There have been heated discussions on the Planning staff recommendations.
27 Over the past two years, they've learned that corporate boards cannot simply
28 accept staff and management recommendations without independently look at the
29 recommendations and conclusions. The elected officials are directly accountable to
30 the citizens. The impacts of these decisions go far beyond land use planning
31 matters.

32
33 Wynne Lee, 2171 Tuttle Lane, Lummi Island, stated she recommended the
34 Council consider the low population, with more of the growth being put into the
35 urban growth areas, and less into the agricultural and rural areas. The growth in
36 the last 20 years has not paid for itself. Whatcom County is still facing an
37 infrastructure problem. In the next 20 years, they have a lower of level services to
38 look forward to.

39
40 Cheryl Lovato-Niles, 2631 Sunset Drive, Bellingham stated she is most
41 concerned about sprawl and its effects. Owning a car has negative environmental
42 and personal effects. Make sure impact fees reflect the true cost of development.
43 Focus on infill development.

44
45 Larry Mansfield, 4145 Ridgewood Avenue, stated they have to stop growth.
46 There is no affordable housing on either coast of the United States. He grew up in
47 Medina, near Bellevue, which used to be very rural.

1
2 Susan Tercek, 102 Briza Court, Bellingham, stated the Council should select
3 the low number. The idea that they should plan for the worst possible population
4 growth is misguided. The growth prediction will have consequences. They are
5 having difficulties solving today's problems at today's population levels. If they
6 can't solve the problems now, when they are small, don't allow the population to
7 grow by 60 percent. Keep growth to a minimum until they can handle it.

8
9 Barbara Rodak, 4456 Aldrich Road, stated she is against the big growth
10 number and asked the Council to select the low growth number. She lived through
11 the huge, unplanned growth in southern California from 1962 through 1973.

12
13 Jack Petree, Sunset Drive, stated the Council is not deciding the amount of
14 growth that will come to the county, but where it will go. It can go in the cities or
15 in the county. If they restrict the cities' ability to build the infrastructure by going
16 with the low projection, they will build smaller roads, units, and sewer. If it's too
17 expensive to build in the cities, it's easy to go into the county.

18
19 Lynn Alton, 4790 Aldrich Road, stated she is for low growth, not high growth.

20
21 John Watts, Bellingham City Council Member, stated he agreed with
22 comments made earlier by Bellingham Council Member Barbara Ryan. Growth
23 management is a serious problem. Both the County and the City are responsible to
24 do their duties to plan for this growth in a reasonable, rational way. Take into
25 consideration of the comments and concerns of all the citizens. This matter came
26 before the City Council just yesterday. The City Council unanimously decided to
27 express its concerns that population projection decision goes too far and too fast
28 without significant input from the City Council. The City Council has had little
29 feedback or participation to make its voice heard. This doesn't make a lot of sense.
30 The update of their respective comprehensive plans need to be done in a spirit of
31 collaboration. This plan must succeed far better than any past plan.

32
33 There have been problems with growth. It's difficult to have cities plan and
34 take infill. It can be done. It takes time to convince the public what to do, and
35 then put those mechanisms into place that will enable the infill to happen.

36
37 In the urban growth areas now (UGA) there is a debate about whose
38 standards must be followed. The development community is getting worn out
39 going back and forth between the City and County. They need to fix the problem
40 they have before taking on additional problems.

41
42 Another problem is revenue sharing. Now, about 12,000 people are living in
43 the City of Bellingham UGA. This is one in six of the current population. The City
44 does not collect property tax for any of those people. No one wants to live in the
45 urban growth area. This is the place where they are supposed to take much of the
46 growth. The urban growth area has become a no man's land because the City
47 expects that it will come in eventually on annexation and things will happen. The

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1 County doesn't spend any additional funds on infrastructure because it thinks the
2 City will do it. The two entities never meet on that issue, which needs to be fixed.
3 It needs to be fixed concurrently with any growth projections.
4

5 Associated with those problems, the City is also continuing to withhold the
6 extension of water and solution, which will allow density to occur and will trigger
7 annexation. This has to happen, as does transfers of development rights (TDR's).
8 Before they get too far down the track, they need to bring everything and everyone
9 together.

10
11 There's something of an artificial urgency being created. He's not sure the
12 number they pick makes a lot of difference. People think it does. If people think it
13 makes a difference, it will make a difference. Be careful about the perceptions they
14 are creating. There's no rush.
15

16 McShane asked that, regardless of what the County does, make sure that the
17 City uses an entire County map instead of just city maps. People consider what's
18 outside the city limits when considering what makes this a great place to live.
19

20 This is only one political decision. He commended Barbara Ryan for taking
21 the hard position of not providing infrastructure that would enable growth outside
22 of the city.
23

24 Caskey-Schreiber stated she was also surprised that it was on the track that
25 it was. They've only had a half meeting before this one on this topic. She was told
26 that planners, small cities, and administrations got together last October on this
27 issue. It seems like the County Council is getting pressure to make a decision
28 they've already come to.
29

30 She has a document that talks about making infill work. It takes time,
31 neighborhood cooperation, and infill-like existing properties. She welcomes the
32 opportunity to work with the City of Bellingham on this issue.
33

34 Brenner stated she was pleasantly surprised to hear from the City. The City
35 Council must have heard about what the City administration has been saying.
36 She's been hearing it for months. The City and County planning commissions have
37 been meeting. She's surprised he hadn't heard that this is what the City
38 administration is planning.
39

40 Watts stated that's the point. He prefers to let the Planning Commission and
41 public do their things first, and then come in after it's been conditioned. He has an
42 interest, but he lets the Planning Commission and the citizen's groups do their work
43 first. The City Council may or may not make changes. That's how the process
44 ought to work.
45

46 Polly Hanson, 2781 West Shore Drive, Lummi Island, stated she looks at
47 things based on reality. Don't lose a grip on the fact that there are beautiful, life-

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1 sustaining, necessary things that are under threat and showing signs of wear. First
2 decide what they absolutely have to have. Decide what is most important in the
3 Whatcom County area. Decide whether they want to preserve the forest or the
4 water quality. Glaciers are melting, and the storehouse of fresh water is being lost.
5 When they build more roads and houses, the aquifers become polluted and used
6 up. They are pumping water out faster than it filters into the aquifer. Build the
7 population around keeping those things that are critical to support life. The
8 newcomers should pay their full way financially, and they should not do in the
9 people who already live here.

10
11 Alan Rhodes, 1211 - 38th Street, Bellingham, stated he agreed with Council
12 Member Barbara Ryan in not rushing on this issue. If a population figure were to
13 be chosen, he would choose the low projection. A study was done in 2000 at the
14 request of the King County Council on the cost of growth in Oregon State. The
15 study supported what has been determined throughout the country for many years.
16 Growth tends to raise taxes and decrease the level of services. This particular
17 study discovered that, in urban growth areas in Washington State, the
18 infrastructure costs of the average single family dwelling was \$83,000. The
19 average impact fee is \$2,500. There is a phenomenal cost to the taxpayer. He
20 wants to know the cost to the taxpayers of Whatcom County for each new single
21 family home being built. They need to take a very conservative approach. Pick the
22 low population figure. The costs of growth can be staggering. He doesn't want to
23 see taxes increase and services dwindle.

24
25 Warren Sheay, Humbolt Street, stated he lives in the York neighborhood,
26 which is the single most crowded neighborhood in the City of Bellingham. There
27 are about 12 people per acre. They are already at a high density. When they talk
28 about infill, they should be careful. There is an infill design that is not for
29 affordable housing or families. They are for single people and college students.
30 They are studios and one-bedroom apartments that will rent for about \$600 per
31 month. The developer has been uncooperative with the neighborhood. When the
32 building goes in, there will be overflow parking. Infill sounds great, but they have
33 to stop all population growth. They have a chance to do that. It will take courage.

34
35 The problem with the planning process is that it focuses on the people who
36 are coming. They have to remember the people who are already here. The people
37 here are ignored by real estate developers and the planning process. They've
38 already figured out what they want for the county through the visioning process of
39 the Comprehensive Plan. Non-public lands are to stay rural in agricultural and
40 forestry uses.

41
42 Dave Pros, 1466 Roy Road, stated there's a profound disconnect and
43 disagreement between planners and the public. He understands that planners like
44 streets that go through subdivisions. In reality, the public likes cul de sacs. There
45 is a reason why elected politicians, not scientists, make the decisions.

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1 Choosing these population numbers is about how they are going to handle
2 buildable land. This exercise should involve how to enhance the quality of life. The
3 high and medium numbers are too large to enhance the quality of life in any area.
4 The argument is that rural areas are saved by densifying and expanding the UGA's.
5 However, that hasn't been shown as true. No one has come up with an answer to
6 how big the projection has to be to stop people from going into the rural areas.
7 Even 10,000 or more new lots will change the fact that people will go to the rural
8 areas. The problem is not solved by the staff's recommendations. It also doesn't
9 help them expand or densify the UGA's. Keep the zoning the way it is in the
10 UGA's. Put as much density as much as possible in the cities. The County will have
11 to deal with the rural areas at a future time. They are only faced with the UGA's
12 right now. Those population numbers don't work for any area. The low number
13 can be workable.

14
15 Fleetwood stated the Planning Committee lost it's quorum at 5:25 p.m.
16

17
18 **OTHER BUSINESS**

19
20 There was no other business.

21
22
23 **ADJOURN**

24
25 The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

26
27
28
29 _____
30 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

31
32 ATTEST: WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
33 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

34
35
36
37 _____
38 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk Seth Fleetwood, Committee Chair