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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Special County Council Work Session

PROPOSED 2007 and 2008 WHATCOM COUNTY BUDGET

October 26, 2006

Council Chair Laurie Caskey-Schreiber called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

Barbara Brenner
Dan McShane
Sam Crawford
Seth Fleetwood
Carl Weimer
L. Ward Nelson

Absent:

None

DISCUSSION OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S 2007/2008 RECOMMENDED BUDGET (AB2006-263B)

McShane stated he wants to hire a technical planning consultant for the County Council. He submitted and read an additional services request (ASR). He read item two on the ASR, problem description. The Council has tried to resolve this issue by limiting the number of policies limited each year, and that becomes a debate during each Comprehensive Plan and zoning amendment cycle. The Council relies heavily on Planning and Development Services Department staff for support. Their workload has far exceeded their ability to meet substantial Council demands. The Council has also relied on citizens and councilmembers to forward policy implementation. All of these have been tried, and performed fairly poorly. A long range planner working directly with the County Council to work on Council-prioritized planning efforts would be helpful. He and other councilmembers have written a number of Comprehensive Plan amendments and zoning text amendments. They are not the best, well-written, or well-thought out. It dumps a complex issue on the Planning Department, which has to respond when the planners have a substantial workload already. Whoever this person is would report directly to the Council Chair or Chair's designee. The Council would work with the Human Resources Department to develop the position. Other County Councils around the state have technical staff support.

Fleetwood stated he commends the recommendation. A member of the public proposed that the Council have a policy analyst. He asked if Councilmember McShane wanted the support limited to planning issues.

McShane stated he does. That's where the Council needs the most help. He is comfortable with the fiscal aspect of things. The budgets that have come forward reflect the Council's wishes. There's never been a big budget battle. As long as that continues, there's no need for a fiscal analyst. He's comfortable with the support of County staff on other issues.

Nelson stated the Council at one time had a financial analyst on staff because there wasn't communication with staff. He's not reluctant to support the proposal. However, as the population grows and changes, there will be a continuous battle about whether there should be a part-time or full-time Council. All the councilmembers are frustrated with doing

1 County business on a part-time basis. As they try to balance their time, he is worried about
2 hiring staff to do things for which the public elected the councilmembers. Don't allow the
3 staff person to introduce or suggest legislation. They would have to have a very firm
4 development of policies on the relationship in the Council Office between the staff person
5 and the Clerk of the Council.
6

7 Crawford read Whatcom County Charter sections 3.22(e), 2.20 (d), and 1.50. He
8 understands that the Council needs more help. The appropriate thing to do is request the
9 help from the administration.
10

11 Brenner stated she and Councilmember Weimer have had interns to help with ideas
12 on planning issues and other things. She'd like to broaden the request to hire someone
13 familiar with planning and the law. Someone should be an all-purpose advisor to the
14 Council. It doesn't cross the line at all. Council ideas would still go to the Planning
15 Department. This is someone to work for the Council and help the Council develop its ideas
16 so they don't overtax the Planning Department and legal counsel. They must be careful
17 that the person doesn't overstep his or her boundaries.
18

19 Fleetwood stated this doesn't create a separation of powers problem. Having an
20 analyst support person isn't incompatible with the Charter.
21

22 Crawford asked what would be a technical long-term planning assistant.
23

24 McShane stated the assistant would be someone with experience in long-term
25 planning. The Council's powers in the Charter allow the Council to create this position. He
26 read Charter section 2.20(c). He's not interested in creating some sort of powers issue. He
27 only wants to enhance what the Council is currently doing. The Council is charged with
28 setting policy and voting on ordinances to implement those policies. They've relied heavily
29 on the Planning Department to bring things forward. The Council asks the Planning
30 Department to do a great deal. Anything the Council does will still go through the Planning
31 process. They've had situations where councilmembers have gone to the Planning
32 Department to do something without Council majority approval. It's critical that the full
33 Council talks about these things. Put money aside for the possibility of hiring a technical
34 assistant, and then work out the details. If they can't work out the details, then they won't
35 hire someone.
36

37 This is necessary whether the Council is part-time or full-time. The councilmembers
38 have had to fill out State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklists. He doesn't feel he is
39 qualified to do that. How the position is managed will be important. It shouldn't be an
40 advocacy position. The Council will remain the advocates. It's critical to protect whoever is
41 hired, so that the person is not at the whim of a single councilmember. The technical
42 assistant should answer to the Chair or a designee. They've established a designee with
43 legal counsel on certain issues.
44

45 Caskey-Schreiber stated she agrees with the need. As the years go by, projects they
46 would like to accomplish for the community get hijacked by the Planning Department's time
47 schedule and ability to put items forward. There may be a way to deliver a better product
48 to the Planning staff that would speed up the process. An example is concurrency. The
49 Council has asked for concurrency for four years. They've missed many opportunities in
50 those four years because the Planning Department doesn't have the staff. There may have
51 been a way for the Council to deliver a better, clearer plan about how they would go about
52 this so they wouldn't have had to spend \$400,000 on a consultant to get this thing done.
53 It's still not done. The Birch Bay community finished its stormwater plan in June. It won't

1 be implemented until 2008 because staff is so backed up. That's unacceptable. In order to
2 capitalize on the growth going on out there, they may have to do a moratorium to halt
3 projects so they're not done incorrectly. Do something to help staff speed things up. She
4 can no longer vote for developments because they know there are better management
5 practices, but the Planning staff is too backed up. The Council can create a policy to
6 manage this staff person.
7

8 Nelson stated he's uncomfortable with long-term planning, which implies a function
9 of the administration, such as implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The Council develops
10 the policies, which are to be administered by the administration. He can see where they
11 can have technical support for a land use legislative assistant. There are policies, but they
12 haven't had the time to develop legislative actions to implement the policies. He is nervous
13 about this being an individual who will decide how the County should look in the future.
14 That may not be the intent, but that is the implication. Get policies in place with legislative
15 action.
16

17 McShane stated that is correct. The Comprehensive Plan is a product of the citizenry
18 of the county and the County Council. The administration played a big role through the
19 Planning Department. Ultimately, it is the County Council's document. There are action
20 items throughout the policy that have had no action take place. Those actions are the
21 responsibility of the Council.
22

23 Nelson stated they need to clean up the wording of the intent to not create confusion
24 for the public. The workload is tremendous. Government moves slowly. There is a
25 continuum of workload. If the Council gets legislation ready to go, that doesn't mean that
26 the Planning Department and legal counsel will be ready to handle that workload. It may
27 create more frustration.
28

29 McShane stated he agrees that they must not increase the workload. The problem is
30 that the Council has been doing that. There are a huge number of Comprehensive Plan
31 applications. Many applications were rejected because the Council didn't want to put that
32 workload on the staff. Councilmembers have put forward amendment applications for which
33 they could have used some assistance. Having a technical assistant who knew what to do
34 would have made things a lot easier. The technical assistant can interface with the Planning
35 Department.
36

37 He wants input from councilmembers about this idea. He is hearing input about
38 changing the title of the position. It should be something the vast majority of the Council
39 should be comfortable with.
40

41 Fleetwood stated this is about the idea that the Council could benefit from some
42 support. He asked if this would be Planning staff or Council staff.
43

44 McShane stated this would be a Council budget item.
45

46 Fleetwood stated he would rather not limit this to technical planning support. Have a
47 policy analyst that can help with a variety of issues. He asked if the present budget does
48 not include a dedicated staff person in the Planning Department for farm protection.
49

50 Dewey Desler, Deputy Administrator, stated there is a dedicated staff person for
51 agricultural protection.
52

1 Weimer stated he supports the idea of hiring a technical assistant for the Council.
2 The Council passes many moratoria that are supposed to be temporary. Change the name
3 to an analyst or policy advisor.
4

5 Brenner stated she would like an analyst of all trades.
6

7 McShane stated he would amend his ASR and move it forward whenever the Council
8 next meets on this issue.
9

10 Caskey-Schreiber stated she would rather make amendments now so it is before the
11 public.
12

13 **Nelson moved** to appropriate up to \$80,000 for the County Council to consider
14 Councilmember McShane's proposal for hiring a planning policy analyst for Council staff.
15

16 **Motion carried 6-1 with Crawford opposed.**
17

18 Weimer referenced ASR 2007-541, which was not approved, regarding
19 implementation of the critical areas ordinance and Shoreline Master Plan. It looks like a lot
20 of the money going into the Planning Department is to help move permits through the
21 system. Once moved through, there's not much check to see how a project affects the
22 environment and critical areas. This is one way to see how the environment is being
23 protected. He doesn't know if this request creates overlap with what is already going on, if
24 additional staff would do what's already going on, or if this staff would do that kind of work.
25

26 Hal Hart, Planning and Development Services Department Director, stated each year
27 the staff review many plans and do mitigation plans. The staff are supposed to watch the
28 mitigation efforts to make sure they're working. However, only interns have been available
29 to do that work. State and federal agencies report that failure of critical areas ordinances
30 occur do to lack of follow-up of mitigation plans. One staff person is now dedicated to
31 agricultural nutrient and critical area compliance issues and implementing permits. It isn't
32 focused on things like wetland mitigation or shoreline mitigation plans. There are more and
33 more mitigation areas.
34

35 Weimer asked if there is a way to scale down the request. Hart stated they could do
36 that. If they add anything to the wetland team, they can redistribute the work. The long-
37 term dedication of someone to track and report on the mitigation plans would be ongoing.
38

39 Weimer stated he is interested in the ASR for just the cost of the Planner II.
40

41 McShane stated there is an attorney assigned for working on violations. He would be
42 interested in hearing his perspective. It may be another department's decision on what
43 they are willing to take on in terms of dealing with people who ignore their permits. Any
44 attorney for the Planning Department would need good information. This position would
45 help provide that information.
46

47 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*
48

49 McShane stated he would like to hear that perspective before supporting this.
50

51 Hart asked if they would like this staff person to also back up the compliance piece.
52

1 McShane stated he would. He would be interested in having that conversation with
2 Royce Buckingham or another attorney who has been assigned to the Planning Department
3 in the past. Hart stated the department staff send out hundreds of letters reminding people
4 periodically that they have a mitigation plan that runs with the property. People sell the
5 property and the new owner is not informed by the previous owner about the mitigation
6 plan. That's why they send out those letters every year or two. It avoids compliance issues
7 later on. As the County approves more mitigation plans, it is becoming a bigger chore. A
8 Planner I or Planner II can do that job.

9
10 McShane stated he would like legal counsel to say what happens when it isn't well
11 documented.

12
13 Brenner asked if the mitigation plan goes on the deed. Hart stated it does, but many
14 people don't look at what's on their deed, so the staff has to explain to them about what's
15 on the deed. That's happened a lot in the last few years.

16
17 Brenner stated she is not comfortable explaining to people what is on their deeds.
18 Hart stated they send out a letter. The County is obligated to check on mitigation plans.
19 When plans are approved, owners are informed that the County will be back to make
20 checks. It's not onerous, they just need to see if the wetland has been planted.

21
22 Brenner stated it's important to check on the plan. Going beyond that into education
23 is disturbing. If it's not happening the way it should, then it's time to enforce. Hart stated
24 he is trying to do a public education process rather than hard-nosed compliance. They are
25 not going to go out and explain deeds to property owners.

26
27 Caskey-Schreiber stated she is in favor of funding this position. There are so many
28 violations and errors that happen. The critical areas ordinance is a set of guidelines that
29 should be followed. If someone doesn't make sure the guidelines are followed, they can't
30 assume it's being done. This is one area they need to beef up. Make sure the regulations
31 are followed. It's easier to fix something before it becomes a problem.

32
33 Brenner asked if they could approve the planner without the assistant. Hart stated
34 that is fine. They would do everything they can to make sure there is a complete system.
35 Any additional full-time equivalent (FTE) employee would improve the process.

36
37 Nelson asked why the ASR was not approved. Desler stated there has been a lot of
38 expansion of the Planning and Development Services Department in the last few years. The
39 administration faces issues with space and human resources. They've had a difficult time
40 coping with that expansion. The department requested \$2.4 million and 17 new positions in
41 the next two years. The administration isn't ready for that future expansion. In the past
42 five years, the County has used fee revenue to pay the cost of the Planning Department.
43 They are within about \$200,000 of having the revenue to support that operation. In 2006,
44 expenditures exceed revenue by \$1.6 million. They will propose adjustments and increases
45 in fee revenue for 2007 and 2008, which will bring the existing proposals into balance, with
46 a deficit of \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million for 2007 and 2008. The administration recommends
47 that 80 percent of new revenue coming into the County in 2007 and 2008 goes to the
48 Sheriff's Office and jail. With the deficits they are experiencing, they are running out of
49 money to do all the things they'd like to do in the Planning and Development Services
50 Department.

51
52 They still have to do a careful review of the permitting and follow up work with the
53 Public Works Department and Planning Department. Revenue and staffing changes may

1 come out of that review. They are not ready to put forward those options yet. If the
2 Council wants more work, time, and attention placed on certain Planning Department
3 functions, the administration will respect that. This request is for additional capacity. The
4 administration cares about implementation of the critical areas ordinance. The \$360,000
5 the administration recommends for additional staff and functions in 2007 are the higher
6 priority issues from the Council.

7
8 **Weimer** stated he appreciates the administration's response. This is a priority for
9 him. If this can be paid for by rearranging things in the Planning Department, that would
10 be wonderful. He **moved** to approve the portions of ASR 2007-541 and ASR 2007-570 that
11 pertain only to the Planner II position.

12
13 Crawford stated the Council added a portable work space out there last year. He
14 asked if there is room for another staff person. Desler stated they are working on plans to
15 build a building to consolidate the Planning Department and Public Works Department. It is
16 in the ten-year capital facilities plan. It's not in the budget yet because they intend to
17 finance a lot of it with real estate excise tax (REET) funding. They will start the bonding
18 process in 2007 for building buildings. If they start adding portables, which still take 18
19 months and hundreds of thousands of dollars, it will divert attention from a long-term
20 solution for handling staffing needs for an urbanizing county.

21
22 Crawford stated they are all in favor of not losing focus on the big plan, but they
23 don't want to be so frugal that the department becomes dysfunctional. Desler stated they
24 have moved staff around recently. One option for two years is to rent space that is ready to
25 go.

26
27 Brenner stated they need to make it work.

28
29 McShane asked the priority of the ASR.

30
31 Caskey-Schreiber stated the ASR has a priority of five.

32
33 McShane asked about the priority ranking. Hart stated their overall ranking was
34 based on systemic things such as making the permit center as efficient as it could be.
35 Items ranked more highly were things like that.

36
37 Dennis Rhodes, Planning and Development Services Department, stated they looked
38 at basic services as the highest priority. The County Executive listed six initiatives he put
39 forward as high priorities. The critical areas ordinance and Shoreline Management Plan
40 implementation came in right after those things. It was initially tied to the permit center.
41 It is a service as an outcome of the permit center. It was later broken out separately. It is
42 one of the highest priorities after the County Executive's priorities.

43
44 McShane asked if a lot of expansion of the department is due to the fact that a
45 tremendous number of permits have been processed. Hart stated that is correct. They can
46 move the permits through the process more efficiently by making changes to the existing
47 zoning ordinance and other methods.

48
49 McShane stated much of the expansion is generated due to revenue from permit
50 fees. He asked if that fee would include the ongoing critical areas or shoreline management
51 monitoring required by the County. Hart stated the interns are paid out of that revenue. As
52 the number of those areas has grown, it's beyond the abilities of interns to keep up that
53 function.

1
2 McShane stated he is comfortable with the motion as long as its funded from the
3 permit fee that goes with it. Rhodes stated they've been looking at the unified fee schedule
4 to make sure they are incorporating the cost into the unified fee schedule. There are
5 proposed amendments to the unified fee schedule to reflect these types of things and new
6 ordinances that have been adopted. There are new line items in the unified fee schedule.
7

8 Hart stated one thing to consider is whether fines on people who are not compliant
9 are still the deterrent that they once were.
10

11 Nelson stated he is concerned about the \$1.6 million deficit. It may be recovered
12 with the additional fees. Desler stated the deficit goes down to \$1.2 million over 2007 and
13 2008. They are adding a large capacity to the Planning and Development Services
14 Department. The question is to what extent the general fund should be used to supplement
15 the kind of expectations they place on the public regarding permitting activity and paying
16 for the planning work that the Council desires to do. They've tried to blend those items.
17 They don't have revenue increases to accommodate all the things they would like to do and
18 still fund mandated services, criminal justice, and law enforcement.
19

20 Nelson asked if there are one-time things to do to create efficiencies on mitigation
21 plan follow up. Hart stated he is worried about the fluctuation of permits due to things like
22 interest rates and seasonal cycles. When the number of permits is lower, it opens up time
23 for staff to do those reviews. This provides someone to be more consistent. They can try
24 the position for one or two years to see how it goes.
25

26 Nelson asked if the space issue has been incorporated into the ASR. Hart stated it is
27 a separate budget item. They are doubling and tripling up in the office space. There is one
28 office left that they can use. They can put two people in that one office. They are
29 redesigning a training room and will have two spaces in there as well.
30

31 Weimer stated they can reevaluate the position in two years even if the position is
32 hired as an ongoing FTE.
33

34 Brenner stated they don't want to continually hire and then let people go. In two
35 years, they will decide that this position is important and will decide to continue it.
36

37 Caskey-Schreiber stated the person will spend a lot of time in the field, and the
38 space isn't a big issue. Some of the deficits are due to one-time capital expenditures to
39 spend down the reserve fund. She asked if they've divided the deficit between ongoing to
40 one-time. Desler stated they have. There are ongoing deficits of \$1 million to \$2 million
41 per year. That will grow in the coming years unless they try to bring that back in balance.
42 They will propose to spend more money, and then hope more revenue will come in in the
43 future. They are hopeful, but must be adaptive. They have to be cautious about
44 expenditures.
45

46 Caskey-Schreiber stated the Council has been cautious. She will find areas to cut
47 and get the revenue to pay for this and possibly issues with the Sheriff's Office.
48

49 McShane asked the workload on mitigation follow up over time. Hart stated the
50 shoreline master program should be done soon. Across Puget Sound, shoreline
51 management has not done the job. Do the job by working with people in groups along
52 different reaches of the shoreline in a more integrated fashion. This is about restoration
53 planning. That's not going on now.

1
2 McShane asked if there would be predictability to the position's workload. Hart
3 stated there would be. Hart stated there would be.
4

5 McShane stated he may support the motion. In considering other approved staff,
6 the department has been flexible with hiring out and meeting a certain turn-around.
7

8 ***Motion carried 5-2 with Nelson and Crawford opposed.***
9

10 ***Crawford moved*** to remove funding for ASR 2007-397, on page 96, from the
11 budget. He's had extensive discussion with Mr. Hart, Mr. Rhodes, and Mr. Martin about this.
12 They can move forward with code scrub issues. He is interested in looking at a
13 supplemental budget request for a code scrub when a request is refined. Doing this now is
14 premature and problematic for staff. He works with Title 20 and Title 21 every day. He is
15 familiar with the evolution of where they are today. After the first of the year, work with
16 staff to come up with a code scrub in a way to not spend as much money and that is more
17 concise and defined.
18

19 Fleetwood asked if the motion includes inclusionary zoning.
20

21 Crawford stated handle inclusionary zoning as a separate issue. It is a development
22 standard that will go into Title 21. Inclusionary zoning is very controversial. Look at it as a
23 separate matter. Don't fold it into a review of Titles 20 and 21.
24

25 Fleetwood stated he doesn't object if they were to separate a code scrub from the
26 inclusionary zoning, as long as there is an ASR for implementing an affordable housing
27 project. This ASR, as written, is vague regarding money for inclusionary zoning. Either the
28 ASR needs to be rewritten or they need a completely new ASR. He is in favor of, and will
29 bring forward, an ASR specifically for implementing this affordable housing effort. A
30 Comprehensive Plan Housing Chapter rewrite lays out specific goals and policies. This effort
31 needs to occur. His zoning text amendment is going through the process. Staff doesn't
32 have the expertise needed on this subject. The County's deliverables can be bifurcated
33 from the City's proposals. They've looked at consultants nationwide. There are excellent
34 consultants on this issue. It is not about just inclusionary mandatory zoning. It is much
35 broader than that. The object is to implement significant provisions in the Comprehensive
36 Plan for affordable housing. He hopes the councilmembers are open to supporting that
37 provision to hire a consultant in 2007 for approximately \$75,000 to do this process in five
38 months. The Council will get a deliverable and vote on this issue in 2007.
39

40 Brenner stated they listed a code scrub as a high priority because it was getting so
41 confusing. Desler stated 85 percent of the resources of the Planning Department staff are
42 devoted to processing permits. Making the work of the last ten years more cohesive, before
43 adding staff, is more effective at this point.
44

45 Caskey-Schreiber stated they discussed it, but didn't put a priority on it.
46

47 Crawford stated this is very all-encompassing. He is in favor of looking at the big
48 picture to understand how whole policies affect other areas. This is not specific enough.
49 Rewriting Titles 20 and 21 is a huge task. It took them 20 or 25 years to write what they
50 have today. He questioned whether the Council is ready to reopen the entire County Code
51 in terms of land use. They are reopening and rewriting everything.
52

1 Caskey-Schreiber asked if this is a task to save for a slower time. Hart stated
2 they've refined it to say "code scrub," meaning making sure there are no inconsistencies
3 and the definitions are clear and consistent. There are inconsistencies between zones, for
4 example. They are not trying to do the whole thing, but will focus on inconsistencies,
5 definitions, and how this will make the process faster and more streamlined.
6

7 Crawford stated that if staff needs additional funding to put the inclusionary zoning
8 through the process, then come forward with that separately.
9

10 McShane stated the end result of past code scrubs is to make things more
11 complicated. The agricultural protection overlay is a good example of that. Each zone may
12 need to have everything spelled out and repeated instead of having cross-references.
13 That's the cause of some of the biggest problems. The real cost of this ASR is the
14 significant public process. If they go into this with the idea of trying to simplify the code,
15 it's a good thing as long as they don't get caught up with taking advantage of the
16 opportunity to amend the code, which is what happened with the last rewrite.
17

18 Crawford asked if this has been refined since the rewriting of the ASR. He asked if it
19 still is a \$150,000 ASR. He will withdraw his amendment if it is refined to be just a code
20 scrub. Hart stated gaining the trust of the community is paramount.
21

22 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.)*
23

24 Hart continued to state that they don't want to change the maps. They want to
25 make the code more transparent. They need tables in the code that show the zones and
26 the conditions for the zones. They need the Council to give orders to the Planning
27 Commission to help them limit the scope of the scrub.
28

29 McShane stated that this could start off with a resolution from the Council to give
30 those orders. Hart stated it could. Also review and adopt the public interaction plan as part
31 of the resolution.
32

33 Fleetwood asked how this ASR responds to the State's ten-year review mandate. He
34 asked if the breadth of this is truly necessary at this time. Hart stated permitting is a
35 significant thorn in everyone's sides. Getting it right, to be responsive to the public, is a
36 goal of Growth Management. Every application must implement the Comprehensive Plan,
37 one individual at a time. Have clear rules that implement the Comprehensive Plan. The
38 breadth of this proposal is absolutely mandated at this time.
39

40 Brenner stated this is about code clarification. It's not about changing the intent.
41 Put that emphasis on the ASR. Hart stated he agrees. They may reorganize the code, but
42 won't say anything different.
43

44 ***Crawford withdrew his motion to amend.***
45

46 Caskey-Schreiber asked if Mr. Hart would hire an outside consultant and whether the
47 project will be done in two years. Hart stated that is correct. Do the zoning ordinance in
48 year one and the subdivision ordinance in year two.
49

50 Rhodes stated they are talking about creating a steering committee to make sure
51 stakeholders are involved from day one. The public interaction plan will lay out a timeline
52 for the entire process.
53

1 Caskey-Schreiber stated they are two years behind in the Comprehensive Plan
2 process. She asked if this is really a top priority. Hart stated it is. It responds to 85
3 percent of the organization that really needs it. They have new staff and management
4 coming on board to get on the docket.
5

6 **Crawford moved** to remove from the budget ASR 2007-580 for legacy planning.
7 This effort, although brought forward by Hal Hart, was proposed by a small group of people
8 who want to move this effort forward. He understands that groups will bring things forward
9 that may drive policy. However, the Council should discuss and debate the need for 100-
10 year planning first. The Council of Governments discussed it extensively, and felt that it
11 wasn't appropriate to do planning beyond 20 years. It's premature to fund this today.
12

13 Brenner stated she would rather start implementing all the plans they already have.
14 This is a nice idea, but there's nothing that they haven't already done. She's not ready to
15 support one more plan until they can implement the plans they've already made. It's an
16 issue of timing. This is not the time to do anything like this. No matter what, this will take
17 up staff time. Planning staff is backlogged.
18

19 Fleetwood stated he is against the motion to delete this ASR. The Comprehensive
20 Plan has a clear vision that must be implemented. Growth trends show that the County will
21 be completely urbanized in 100 years. Many people in the community have recently talked
22 about doing grander long-term planning. It was expressed in the growth forum that
23 happened in Bellingham. Many groups and citizens have asked for this work to be done.
24 This project will do geographic information system (GIS) mapping based on scientific
25 information to create natural resource preservation lines. The outcome could be included in
26 the Comprehensive Plan, which would inform future councils about where growth should go.
27

28 Nelson stated all planning processes involve citizens. He is not comfortable with this
29 at this time. The Growth Management Act (GMA) went through many dissertations at the
30 State and local levels. It created a lot of antagonism. It took years to rebuild the trust in
31 the community. Something this large, more than \$60,000, will require staffing time and
32 more funding if they want to plan for 100 years. The community has grown in the way the
33 community wants, through the election and planning processes. If they spend more money
34 on citizen groups, other things won't get done. Many things in this proposal have already
35 been done and need to be implemented. He won't support this ASR. The citizens should
36 put together a package on this item for the voters to decide.
37

38 Fleetwood stated the labor is going to be done by other people, not staff.
39

40 Caskey-Schreiber stated she is in favor of this ASR. She heard from many citizens,
41 including the development community, about wanting predictability in Whatcom County.
42 This legacy plan is complementary to other things out there. If it is citizen-driven, there is a
43 good chance for success. A big visioning effort should come from the community rather
44 than the elected officials. The citizen's group is very diverse.
45

46 Brenner stated the GMA, if left to it's own devices, does not envision a fully
47 urbanized county. The GMA is directed by what the Council decides. The Council can make
48 those hard choices. Another plan will not make it better. They can do a 100-year plan, and
49 a future council can change it or ignore it. They are so far ahead of other places already. If
50 they need more GIS mapping, then do it. There isn't predictability when the Council keeps
51 changing the rules. Nothing they are doing is implemented, which is frustrating.
52

1 Weimer asked if the total cost of this is \$700,000, and the Council is being asked for
2 \$120,000. Hart stated the request is for \$60,000 per year for two years. There may be a
3 third year. The citizen group proposing this is seeking other contributions through grants.
4 The coordination will require three people in his office. Staff will have to respond to what
5 the group proposes.
6

7 Weimer asked why they are not going through a request for proposals (RFP) process.
8 Desler stated they would have to do that. They have to follow purchasing procedures. He's
9 told that to the advocates.
10

11 Tris Shirley, Bellingham, stated he's worked on this for a couple of years. To some
12 extent, there is a chicken-and-an-egg problem. They have good people committed to the
13 project, which is difficult to get if there isn't funding for the work. They have to get started
14 somewhere. They need an opportunity to address the questions raised by the Council.
15 There are different concepts of what this project may be. The ASR isn't a finished
16 statement of the work. They needed to get something to get started. There are positive
17 possibilities from this effort. It's not necessarily an effort to make policy changes for today.
18 They need better tools for making better decisions. They can get solve immediate problems
19 and get immediate benefits if they've done the research to understand the relationships
20 between policy decisions. That work has been done in some areas, but it hasn't been
21 assembled or built into a tool for the Council to use to make its daily decisions. He hopes to
22 work with the Council to define this effort so it's useful to the Council and the community.
23

24 Nelson asked if they have funding at this time. Shirley stated he is not a principal on
25 this project.
26

27 Nelson asked if there is community interest in funding this.
28

29 Regan Smith, Lake Whatcom Legacy Project, stated the project has been underway
30 for six months. Funding is coming in. They are raising additional money from private
31 foundations and individual donors. She has made progress on obtaining two grants.
32

33 Nelson stated start with getting community support and working with existing
34 organizations. Develop their directions for policy, legislative actions, and goals to provide a
35 community. The Council would look at that direction objectively to make sure it meets
36 Comprehensive Planning goals and future needs. Smith stated this will be a three or three
37 and a half year project. There are a number of diverse community leaders who have
38 committed to serving on this project. Three staff people are doing public outreach,
39 technical analysis, and project management. There is a lot of energy in inventory and
40 analysis work, particularly with the biological aspects. They want a strong scientific
41 foundation for this project. She's worked with State agencies to bring this information
42 together. They need the support and commitment of the County and seed money to keep
43 them going throughout the next three years. It's critical to move forward. There is a lot of
44 momentum and work happening. It depends on receiving additional funds.
45

46 There are concerns about having another plan and using a lot of additional County
47 capacity that isn't available. This project complements what the County is already doing. It
48 adds value and efficiency. Much information resides in a number of different agencies. One
49 of the good aspects is that this project brings all that information together to work closely
50 with the tools the County currently uses to evaluate development permits. Anything they
51 will do will make County planning more efficient and well-informed.
52

1 Brenner asked who they are working with at the County. Smith stated they have sat
2 down with staff to make sure their efforts are most useful for augmenting what the County
3 is already doing.

4
5 Caskey-Schreiber stated the citizen effort is so organized that there are already
6 three hired staff.

7
8 Crawford asked where the existing money came from. Smith stated it came from
9 foundation money. Now, the Whatcom Legacy Project is not incorporated as a non-profit.
10 They have chosen a fiscal sponsor, Conservation Northwest.

11
12 Crawford asked if they are working with the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic
13 Development Council (EDC), and the Association of Realtors. He asked if any of these
14 groups are involved with the Whatcom Legacy Project.

15
16 Maurie Ingram, Trillium representative and steering committee member, stated EDC
17 Interim Director Nancy Jordan is a member on the steering committee, but doesn't
18 technically represent the EDC because Ms. Jordan is only the interim director. However, Ms.
19 Jordan plays an active role in the steering committee.

20
21 She is involved with the steering committee because the steering committee is very
22 well-representative of the community in terms of sector representation, political
23 representation and geographic representation throughout the county. They have not yet
24 involved folks from all the groups mentioned, but they will be involved over the course of
25 the project.

26
27 She is confident that the County will receive much more product outcome and
28 product than the amount of resources it invests. This is not a reactionary effort. They are
29 focused on opportunity. A number of plans are in place, but these are shorter term plans.
30 The steering committee believes that those plans should be integrated into a long-term
31 framework. The Planning Department staffing impacts will be to help the decision-makers
32 and community understand the complexity of all the issues. There will be benefit to
33 implementation and staffing needs. They can't project a 100-year future, but can give
34 people from all sectors an opportunity to provide input on the kinds of things they can do
35 now to make the decision-making process a lot easier for future councils.

36
37 Roger VanDyken, Lynden, stated he is a member of the steering committee. If
38 anything is going to be successful, they have to come together. One group can't put
39 forward its vision for the future of Whatcom County and force it on the rest of the
40 community. The vision must include the realistic future of Whatcom County, including
41 population projections from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). The vision must
42 provide good jobs and an opportunity for job creation. The vision must be predictable to
43 minimize the continual battle between environmentalists and developers. The vision must
44 be balance. He's insisted that property rights advocates, realtors, environmentalists,
45 farmers, developers, and business people be included. Whatcom County is beautiful, but
46 they don't want to end up like Orange County. There are essential values that everyone
47 would like to see. Ultimately, the vision has to be an expression of the community
48 members.

49
50 Brenner stated that everyone in the county agrees with Mr. VanDyken in theory.
51 However, many people aren't going to give up their future for someone else's perceived
52 greater good. The County Council has the tools now to do those things, but it doesn't have
53 the tools to do implementation. She's not ready to spread staff any thinner. Get some

1 things done instead. Someone commented that the Council wanted concurrency four years
2 ago.

3
4 (Clerk's Note: End of tape two, side A.)

5
6 Weimer stated he agreed with Mr. Van Dyken. However, he will vote against this
7 project. They've done the first two-thirds of this project. They have many plans already,
8 including a community visioning plan. They have the science already. He supports this
9 group that has come together, and hopes they will look for ways to begin implementing
10 these existing plan. He hopes the County will support those efforts at some point through
11 the legislature. When this group is ready to implement solutions, he hopes the County is
12 ready to fund them. Get this group up to speed with the vision that is already there instead
13 of doing the science and mapping that already exists.

14
15 McShane stated he has abstained from discussion and voting. There is no fiduciary
16 conflict, but his wife is on the steering committee.

17
18 **Motion carried 4-2 with Fleetwood and Caskey-Schreiber in favor and**
19 **McShane abstaining.**

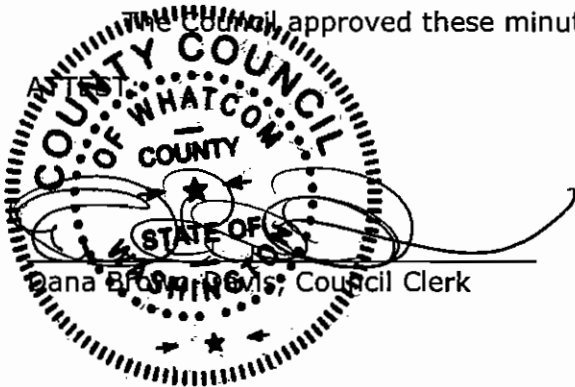
20
21
22 **ADJOURN**

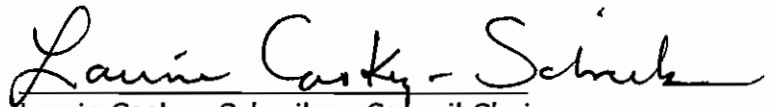
23
24 The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

25
26 
27 _____
28 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

29
30 The Council approved these minutes on July 10, 2007.

31
32 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
33 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON



39
40 
41 _____
42 Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Council Chair