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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
**Special Planning and Development Committee**

November 13, 2007

Committee Chair Seth Fleetwood called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

Laurie Caskey-Schreiber  
Dan McShane

Absent:

None

Also Present:

None

**1. DISCUSSION REGARDING UGA BOUNDARY AND ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS (AB2007-318)**

Fleetwood stated they mainly intend to go over the ordinance findings today.

Rebecca Craven, Council Policy Analyst, submitted a handout (*on file*) of an outline for findings and conclusions. The outline is draft. Additional findings and conclusions will be produced when the remainder of the subarea plan chapters are produced and finalized. This document was prepared with the assumption that the Council decision follows the committee's recommendations from July and last week. The full Council has not voted on final action. These draft findings reflects the committee's recommendation.

She read through the first section of the handout regarding background and policy framework, public participation, and draft findings and conclusions. Each item on the lists will become a paragraph in the ordinance. She doesn't intend to repeat the City of Bellingham public process, which is included in their original resolution and recommendation. Read through the findings and conclusion items to make sure everything is included that should be.

McShane referenced the first item under the fifth bullet for findings and conclusions, on page two, regarding the minimum density rather than the average or maximum build out assumed in the UGA. The Planning Commission basically looked at an assumption of how the urban growth areas (UGA's) have developed so far, and the average. Craven stated that was the assumption for applying a 15 percent land availability factor in the city. They accounted for what they felt was historic under-building. She believes that's the same for the build-out in the UGA. She believes that's correct.

McShane stated that in some areas there was a lack of interest in development, which they added into their calculations. Craven stated that's correct, although they did it slightly different. One would normally consider a person's intent to develop or not develop in the land availability factor. Even though they had that information, they did not use the land availability factor in the UGA. They used a minimum density assumption, but did not apply a land availability factor.

McShane asked if they can address this to a degree through the interlocal agreement between the City and County for the urban growth areas. Craven stated that's the place to address it. In terms of formalizing the current City policy on utility extensions, which has

1 an impact on UGA build out, memorialize those efforts within the context of an interlocal  
2 agreement.

3  
4 McShane stated they can assume higher density with a better interlocal agreement.  
5 They have the discretion to take that into account. Craven stated that's correct. Everyone  
6 must recognize that the UGA is the future city. It doesn't make sense to have full build out  
7 at one-quarter acre lots. Control that build out before it is annexed.

8  
9 Craven continued to read through the handout.

10  
11 Fleetwood asked if Ms. Craven has heard that City staff and City Council Members all  
12 acknowledge that they will probably change the parks level of service. Craven stated she  
13 has, anecdotally.

14  
15 McShane stated the other issue is not counting park land that is immediately  
16 adjacent to the City and urban growth areas, which still serves the city. Craven stated they  
17 will also consider the issue of not counting the current UGA population as being served by  
18 City parks. That totals thousands of people, assuming people in the UGA use city parks,  
19 which is a fair assumption.

20  
21 She completed reading the handout. She will continue to work on the ordinance this  
22 week. She will bring the ordinance to the Council for introduction at the next Council  
23 meeting.

24  
25 Caskey-Schreiber thanked Ms. Craven for summarizing the committee's rationale.

26  
27 Fleetwood stated City of Bellingham Assistant City Attorney Alan Marriner sent the  
28 Council a brief memo about City/County reconciliation (*on file*). The City will meet to  
29 discuss the joint meeting on Monday. They hope to have the joint City Council and County  
30 Council meeting on November 20.

31  
32 Craven referenced the handout from Mr. Marriner City staff options for closing the  
33 gap between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County proposed UGA's (*on file*). She  
34 described the map key colors and proposed options.

35  
36 Caskey-Schreiber stated there is a proposal to take Van Wyck Road, which is north  
37 of the 80-acre parcel, from Meridian Street to Hannegan Road. There would be a big march  
38 through very rural area.

39  
40 (*Clerk's Note: The committee took a seven-minute break at 1:23 p.m.*)

41  
42 Caskey-Schreiber stated Bellingham is still at a 25 percent safety factor with this  
43 proposal.

44  
45 (*Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.*)

46  
47 Caskey-Schreiber continued to state that staff should review the options and come  
48 back to the committee with a recommendation or suggest a reasonable compromise. She  
49 would like to know also what the City Council says about the options. She would like to  
50 know if the City Council approves this. Four of the City council members have indicated  
51 otherwise during conversations she's had with them. Craven stated this will be relayed to  
52 the City Council. She expects they will discuss it in executive session.

53

1 McShane asked why they would go into executive session to discuss a public issue.  
2 They should in no way include the Meas/Lipscomb and 80 acres north of the city limits on  
3 either side of Hannegan Road. There's no way to get a supplemental environmental impact  
4 statement (EIS) done by February. Keep the deadline in mind. Don't throw something in at  
5 the last minute. The City could have reacted to the County recommendations in July or  
6 August. Nothing in this proposal makes him think any different from the committee  
7 recommendation.

8  
9 Fleetwood asked if the areas designated for further review would be reviewed for  
10 possible inclusion now or designated for future review now, but not included. Craven stated  
11 she doesn't know. She guesses that the City suggests including the areas now, in this  
12 decision cycle.

13  
14 Caskey-Schreiber stated she agrees with Councilmember McShane. She may be  
15 willing to go up to a 12 to 15 percent safety factor. There is no way she will agree to a 25  
16 percent safety factor. Make sure the City Council knows that before its meeting on  
17 November 19.

18  
19 Craven asked if the committee wants the staff to examine the rezone  
20 recommendations.

21  
22 Caskey-Schreiber stated a compromise could be a portion of the 80 acres north of  
23 the King Mountain.

24  
25 Fleetwood stated the City's willingness to increase minimum densities constitutes  
26 compromise on the City's part. The County's willingness to bring in the additional 100 acres  
27 and consider increasing the safety factor by 50 percent is a big leap, but constitutes the  
28 County's compromise.

29  
30 Caskey-Schreiber stated a possible compromise is including the areas on the map  
31 identified by the green color, which would equal 100 acres and be a 50 percent increase in  
32 safety factor.

33  
34 McShane stated he's not heard a compelling reason to include those 80 acres in the  
35 urban growth area, other than the City's desire to fund a road project. He asked if there is  
36 some criteria to let infrastructure drive the location of growth, versus the actual population  
37 needs. That's inconsistent with an appropriate safety factor.

38  
39 Caskey-Schreiber asked what a compromise would be.

40  
41 McShane stated this committee hasn't made any recommendation to change the  
42 City's recommendation for Dewey Valley. The committee stayed with the City's  
43 recommendation. Now, the City recommends changing the minimum density from six units  
44 per acre to eight units per acre. He asked if that's a minimum density of eight units per  
45 acre throughout the entire area. He's okay with that. The Bakerview Road/James Street  
46 recommendation is a minor change. It's already pretty dense. The City is going to annex  
47 and rezone that area anyway, so it doesn't matter. The Aldrich area is all urban residential,  
48 mixed use (UR-MX) zone. They could make the minimum density eight units per acre  
49 instead of six units per acre.

50  
51 Craven asked if the committee wants staff to look at those rezones more carefully.

52  
53 ***The committee concurred.***

1  
2 McShane referenced Bear Creek. Craven stated always requested that Bear Creek  
3 be included. The committee recommended not including it. The committee talked about  
4 the possibility of including Bear Creek as a long-term planning area instead of a UGA, but  
5 the committee was reluctant. The City reiterates its original request to include Bear Creek.  
6

7 Fleetwood stated Councilmember McShane would like Ms. Craven to get a better  
8 understanding of the City's reasons for Bear Creek. He asked if increased density will pay  
9 the public infrastructure costs for the new road. Craven stated it's mostly a financing issue.  
10 The County planning staff is concerned that those two arterials go in with the right sequence  
11 and coordination, or else outlying County roads will acquire a lot more traffic.  
12

13 She will get a staff report to the Council sometime this week. She will continue  
14 working on the draft findings in anticipation of introducing the ordinance on Tuesday, and  
15 that there will be a joint meeting to talk about these other issues with the City and possible  
16 amendments on Tuesday. The City wants identified options to discuss.  
17

18 Fleetwood stated Ms. Craven can develop those options for discussion.  
19

20 ***The committee concurred.***  
21

22 McShane stated the committee must have clarity from the full Council in anticipation  
23 of the joint meeting.  
24

25 ***Fleetwood*** stated they are forming positions that may be the basis for compromise.  
26 There is a possibility of approving the minimum densities, expanding 100 acres, and to  
27 expand the safety factor by 50 percent to make that work. Have Ms. Craven review a few  
28 things, have conversations with the City, and present her information to the Council in a  
29 memo by Friday. The Council is not ready to take a final position. He ***moved*** for the  
30 committee to take the general direction to agree to minimum densities, bring in 100 acres,  
31 and expand the safety factor by 50 percent to make all that work.  
32

33 Caskey-Schreiber stated she would support that. The minimum density is all in the  
34 north part of Bellingham. She is concerned about the City's propensity to maximize the  
35 highest densities in the farthest areas of the city core, not toward the city's south limits.  
36 They are creating an imbalance.  
37

38 Fleetwood stated Councilmember Caskey-Schreiber can talk to the City about the  
39 donut-effect of creating lower densities in the city core and higher densities in the UGA's.  
40 He would like to know if increased densities relieves pressure on the City to aggressively  
41 create urban centers and neighborhood villages. Craven stated the City refers to a need to  
42 accommodate 5,215 people, which is the same need included in the City's original land  
43 supply analysis, based on the safety factors they applied. The City isn't changing its other  
44 assumptions on how else Bellingham would grow. The areas not included in this proposal,  
45 but included in the City's original request, would be accommodated in other ways indicated.  
46

47 An addition of 100 acres to the committee's recommendation is a 40 percent  
48 increase in safety factor, in terms of acreage. The increases in minimum density would  
49 accommodate an additional 2,700 people. That's more than the deficit from the  
50 committee's original recommendation. The safety factor would go up a lot if they include  
51 those rezones and an additional 100 acres. Those rezones themselves would accommodate  
52 the committee's recommendation. Increasing the density accommodates what they need to  
53 accommodate. They would not have to expand the UGA at all.

1  
2 Caskey-Schreiber stated they could increase the safety factor without including any  
3 additional lands. Craven stated that's correct.  
4

5 Caskey-Schreiber stated she supports raising the minimum density to eight units per  
6 acre and add the 20-acre park. That is her compromise to the City, in addition to the  
7 committee's original recommendation.  
8

9 ***Fleetwood withdrew his motion.***

10  
11 McShane stated the area won't develop until it is annexed, by which time the City  
12 will have complete control over whatever density it wants. The same argument can apply to  
13 any of these areas.  
14

15 Fleetwood stated it is a compromise, from the City's perspective.  
16

17 **McShane** stated it would make the City feel better. He ***moved*** to recommend the  
18 City's recommended minimum density to eight units per acres in the City's recommended  
19 minimum density areas for Aldrich Road, James Street, Bakerview Road, and Dewey Valley  
20 and add the 20-acre park, so Ms. Craven can take the recommendation to the Bellingham  
21 staff.  
22

23 Fleetwood stated the motion is to give direction to staff, not to make a  
24 recommendation to the full Council.  
25

26 Caskey-Schreiber stated this might change completely in the joint meeting.  
27

28 ***Motion carried unanimously.***

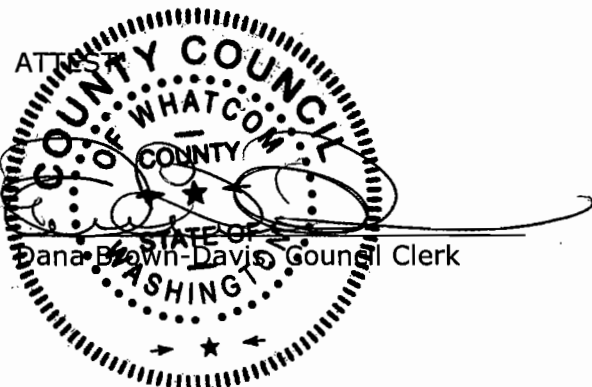
29  
30 McShane stated this is the recommendation for the purpose of negotiation. He's  
31 willing to reconsider if the City presents a different proposal.  
32

33  
34 **ADJOURN**

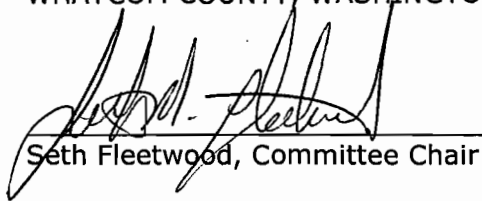
35  
36 The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.  
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40 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription  
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49 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk  
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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Seth Fleetwood, Committee Chair