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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Planning and Development Committee

September 29, 2009

Committee Chair Laurie Caskey-Schreiber called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present: Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Bob Kelly and Carl Weimer.
Absent: None.
Also Present: Sam Crawford, Barbara Brenner and Seth Fleetwood.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. DISCUSSION AND WORK SESSION ON 10 YEAR UGA REVIEW (AB2009-052F)

Rebecca Craven, Council Policy Analyst, referenced the memo from Planning Director David Stalheim to the Whatcom County Planning Commission dated September 23, 2009 regarding the Urban Growth Area Deliberations on September 24 (*on file*).

David Stalheim, Planning and Development Services Department Director, reviewed the location of relevant information in the Executive's recommendation packet. He described the tables in the land capacity analysis in Appendix B of the report, beginning on page B-5. The Cities of Lynden and Bellingham have land capacity issues, and will have to show the County how they will accommodate the extra growth. Some reserve allocation numbers for the smaller areas may be unrealistic. Removing those reserves would make the Bellingham allocation increase. As they allocate more of the rural growth to the urban areas, they allocate higher-than-historic numbers to the urban areas. They anticipate the growth rate in Whatcom County to slow.

Regarding employment allocations, they are trying to allocate things that encourage small communities to develop their own economic centers for employment. The Executive's recommendation for Bellingham and the City of Bellingham's proposal are the same. They are trying to allocate things based on a proposed land use policy that encourages small communities to develop more economic centers for employment.

He read the assumptions in Tables 8 and 9 and the four main issues on page three of his memo. The Planning Commission wants more growth in Bellingham.

The Planning Commission has a policy issue regarding urban growth area reserves. He referenced pages 2-71 through 2-73 in the proposed plan for the criteria to transfer reserve areas to the urban growth area (UGA) and reserve descriptions and read through page 4 of 13 of his memo. They anticipate being allowed to designate a reserve area within the 20-year planning period.

He described the Executive's proposal for the City of Everson and the Planning Commission's recommendation. The Planning Commission's overall intent is predominantly to see more growth in Bellingham.

Discussion included whether there are clear policies to show how they are going to encourage more population in the urban areas than in the rural areas; allocating population

1 at rates that don't reflect historic growth rates; proper zoning in Columbia Valley to
2 encourage employment; migration patterns and how overall growth rates are calculated; a
3 policy to provide more space in the urban areas; a slower population growth rate; providing
4 services in the Columbia Valley; a historic population growth of 2.3 percent and a planned
5 population growth of 1.3 percent; having an interlocal agreement that says an area won't
6 be served with urban services until annexation; the inadequacy of existing capital facilities
7 plans; defining the requirements for converting from urban reserve to UGA; the
8 consequences of building to city standards in UGA's; whether there is a technical advantage
9 for property to be a reserve instead of changing back to a rural area; the concept of short-
10 and long-term UGA's; whether reserve areas are simply policy statements about the next
11 step for growth; having maps that clearly show and compare the City proposal, the
12 Executive's recommendation, and the Planning Commission recommendation for each UGA
13 area, and; a significant amount of good, agricultural soils being farmed that isn't on the list
14 of agricultural lands.

15
16 Erin Osborne, Planning and Development Services Department, described the City of
17 Everson proposal for UGA expansion.

18
19 Caskey-Schreiber asked if they've reviewed the City's capital facilities plan to see if it
20 matches the population projection, given the Planning Commission's recommendation for
21 the reduced UGA. Stalheim stated capital facilities plans for several jurisdictions are
22 missing. He doesn't think the City of Everson has a wastewater plan. Everson serves
23 Nooksack, so the same is true for the City of Nooksack.

24
25 Caskey-Schreiber asked the City's intent to submit a capital facilities plan.

26
27 Rollin Harper, City of Everson Planning Consultant, stated the City of Everson is
28 planning to develop a sewer comprehensive plan. They have covered the basics in their
29 comprehensive plan. They've looked at capacity. They haven't included the area the City
30 asked to add to the UGA. The capacity analyses in the comprehensive plan are based on
31 the population. It's in excess of the decreased allocation from the Executive's
32 recommendation. They have capacity, but they haven't determined the details of that
33 capacity. Everson is aware it will have to upgrade its sewer treatment plant. The City
34 doesn't have the capacity to serve this area now, but they understand it will have to be
35 built.

36
37 Weimer stated he wants to talk at some point about whether the plans Mr. Harper
38 describes will meet the needs of the Hearings Board. Stalheim stated the draft plan
39 includes reconciliation policies. Many jurisdictions want to know what they are planning for
40 before taking the next step. The jurisdictions want to know that information before they
41 commit funds to do that final planning step. That's the approach the proposed plan takes.
42 The 2011 update is supposed to address the entire comprehensive plan and development
43 regulations, including capital facilities. Jurisdictions are supposed to do a full review at that
44 time.

45
46 Kelly asked if the Executive developed the reserve option to address the Cities' needs
47 to know about and plan for their capital facilities plans. Stalheim stated it was, for some
48 areas.

49
50 Kelly asked if the Council can use the concept of a reserve as a mechanism to let
51 Cities know where logical growth is going. Stalheim stated that's why one of the criteria
52 includes adequate public facilities in reserves. The mechanism depends on where they want
53 to be with the UGA decisions on capital facilities, in the first place. If they want a higher

1 degree of certainty that the capital facilities plans are in place now, it will determine how
2 they designate the UGA's and reserves. The Executive's recommendation leans more on the
3 idea that they will do their work over the next two years.

4
5 Discussion on the City of Nooksack. Stalheim described the area and the City's
6 proposal, the Executive's proposal, and the Planning Commission discussion of Nooksack,
7 including flooding and sediment from Swift Creek.

8
9 Discussion of Nooksack included asbestos levels in Swift Creek and the Sumas River;
10 effects on adjacent mineral resource lands; UGA's in Sumas River's potential flood areas;
11 not adding more housing in areas with naturally-occurring asbestos, and; the Cities of
12 Nooksack and Everson trading UGA's to avoid areas with asbestos.

13
14 Discussion on the City of Sumas. Stalheim described the area and the City's
15 proposal, the Executive's proposal, and the Planning Commission discussion of Sumas.

16
17 Discussion of Nooksack included liability from County-sanctioned development in a
18 flood plan; whether the City can meet its population projections if areas in the flood plain
19 were removed from the existing UGA; locating a truck stop outside of the city's downtown
20 or at existing, closed gas stations downtown, and; soil types in the Sumas area.

21
22 There was discussion of the upcoming schedule for further UGA discussions.

23
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25 **OTHER BUSINESS**

26
27 There was no other business.

28
29
30 **ADJOURN**

31
32 The meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

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Please contact the Council Office to obtain an
official, signed copy:
360-676-6690 or council@co.whatcom.wa.us

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45 _____
46 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Committee Chair