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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
**Planning and Development Committee**

October 27, 2009

Committee Chair Laurie Caskey-Schreiber called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

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

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

1. **REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO SIGN AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF EVERSON INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR ANNEXATION OF APPROXIMATELY 9.83 ACRES (SKILLMAN EAST EVERSON ANNEXATION), PER THE CONDITIONS OF ORDINANCE 2007-049 (AB2009-407)**

Kate Blystone, Planning and Development Services Department, gave a staff report.

Rollin Harper, City of Everson, stated he is working on the annexation ordinance that includes land use restrictions and an agricultural buffer to meet the Council's satisfaction.

*Weimer moved* to recommend approval to the full Council.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Ayes:** Caskey-Schreiber, Kelly and Weimer (3)  
**Nays:** None (0)

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

1. **URBAN GROWTH AREA 10-YEAR REVIEW: CITY RESPONSES TO COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND BEGIN REVIEW OF PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS (AB2009-052F)**

Bellingham

Tim Stewart, City of Bellingham, submitted and read through a handout of questionnaire responses (*on file*). They only process annexations through the petition process. He described the City's capital facilities planning process.

Discussion included current annexation requests for Geneva; using other methods for annexation; how the City can best protect the watershed and its stormwater rules; how the Silver Beach ordinance would apply to urban growth areas (UGA's); whether the City can adopt standards that are lower than urban level, to protect the watershed; why the City likes the urban reserve concept; the City's opinion of the County Planning Commission recommendation to keep the Dewey Valley area in the UGA, and; the Dewey Valley work plan.

1 Blaine

2  
3 Michael Jones, City of Blaine Community Development Director, submitted and read  
4 from a handout (*on file*). He referenced a letter from the Mayor dated October 12, 2009.  
5 The City is concerned about potential loss of UGA areas.

6  
7 Everson

8  
9 Andy Rowlson, City of Everson Councilmember, referenced question 1.a for the City  
10 of Everson and stated much of the land in the UGA is wet. To use land wisely, they would  
11 like to swap agricultural land for other lands that can be developed more efficiently.

12  
13 Rollin Harper, City of Everson, stated the area the City asked to add is outside the  
14 flood plain, but encircled by the flood plain. The UGA won't expand any farther in this  
15 direction, toward Lynden. He referenced question 1.b for the City of Everson, and stated  
16 Everson proposes a net contraction out of agricultural areas. The City prefers the reserve  
17 area over removal from the UGA.

18  
19 Discussion included whether the land swap benefits farmland and the claim that  
20 certain areas will always remain in agriculture.

21  
22 Rowlson stated he does not agree with the urban reserve concept. It creates  
23 uncertainty for the property owners. There is no value to urban reserves.

24  
25 Ferndale

26  
27 Dennis Rhodes, City of Ferndale Community Development Director, stated the City  
28 submitted it's questionnaire answers last week (*on file*). He is available for questions.

29  
30 Caskey-Schreiber asked for a summary of the City's answers.

31  
32 Jori Burnett, City of Ferndale Senior Planner, stated they don't dispute the numbers  
33 that the Growth Management Coordinating Council (GMCC) recommended. They dispute  
34 how the numbers are distributed throughout the City and UGA. The County land capacity  
35 analysis overstates the City's existing capacity by approximately 3,000 people. The City  
36 acknowledges that it's existing UGA is double the capacity of what it needs to be currently.  
37 The City proposes cutting it's UGA by half. They have identified four specific changes to the  
38 land capacity inputs, which is documented in its proposal. The land capacity analysis  
39 doesn't look at the distribution of employment capacity.

40  
41 Discussion included aggregation; the buildable lands inventory; the City's request  
42 regarding areas 16 and 17, including the residential and commercial components; where the  
43 City expects residential growth to occur in areas one through four; whether including areas  
44 16 and 17 line up with employment projections and whether those areas are planned to be  
45 developed by big box stores; the City's project to reassess all commercial lands and their  
46 distribution; how design standards will prevent unfettered growth of big box stores; the  
47 City's plans to update its Comprehensive Plan, and; the City's conclusion that it needs UGA's  
48 and the County's conclusion that the City can accommodate growth with the land it has  
49 already.

1 Lynden

2  
3 Amy Harksell, City of Lynden Planning Director, referenced and read from the memo  
4 from the City of Lynden dated October 27, 2009 regarding Lynden's response to questions  
5 from Council Planning and Development Committee (*on file*), questions 1.a and 1.b. When  
6 the agricultural plans are developed, the City would like to provide input in the process. If  
7 they do the things they say, such as transfer of development right (TDR) sending areas, the  
8 County must allow the urban reserve area to become a UGA.

9  
10 She referenced and read from the memo from the City of Lynden dated October 27,  
11 2009 regarding Lynden's response to questions from Council Planning and Development  
12 Committee (*on file*), questions 3.a through 3.c. They have increased their density  
13 throughout the city. They are doing infill and reducing development standards. However,  
14 Lynden is different from other cities in the county. Residents need housing choices  
15 throughout the county. They are allowed to preserve their character. They are slowing  
16 their consumption of land. They have a logical outer boundary. By the time they fill their  
17 population, another huge investment of money for infrastructure will be required. At that  
18 time, they will have to decide how or why they should go beyond that boundary. They want  
19 to preserve their agrarian lifestyle.

20  
21 Bob Carmichael, City of Lynden Attorney, stated the City of Lynden can be a  
22 powerful ally to preserve agricultural land in Whatcom County. Lynden is committed to an  
23 agrarian lifestyle.

24  
25 He referenced and read from the memo from the City of Lynden dated October 27,  
26 2009 regarding Lynden's response to questions from Council Planning and Development  
27 Committee (*on file*), questions 2.a and 2.b. regarding water rights.

28  
29 Discussion included why the County should accommodate growth rates higher than  
30 what the Executive and Planning Commission have recommended.

31 Nooksack

32  
33 Rollin Harper, City of Nooksack, stated the area proposed for removal is Nooksack's  
34 only industrial area. If removed as the Executive proposes, there is no place for industrial  
35 job growth in Nooksack, according to Nooksack City Council members. They must maintain  
36 a Nooksack job base.

37  
38 Regarding question 2.b, the City identified a Swift Creek sedimentation area inside  
39 the city limits of 18 acres. If that area were accounted for, it would take the land capacity  
40 analysis surplus of two acres to negative territory. The City can work with the Nooksack  
41 River flood plain if the UGA remains. If the UGA is removed, they will be in deficit for both  
42 industrial and residential capacity. They would be pleased to stick with the existing UGA.  
43 In the next two years, do public process work to find other options that don't include going  
44 east.

45  
46 Discussion included a letter from the Nooksack School District regarding retaining all  
47 of the UGA; whether the northern part of the UGA will be residential and the southern part  
48 of the UGA will be industrial; the City's small margin of error for land supply;

49 Sumas

1 Rollin Harper, City of Sumas, described the City, Executive, and Planning  
2 Commission recommendations.

3  
4 Bob Bromley, Sumas Mayor, described the history of flooding in the Sumas area.  
5 Sumas River has never flooded the city of Sumas.

6  
7 Harper stated the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps show that  
8 area as a flood plain.

9  
10 Bromley referenced question two and stated the hydrology is reduced and  
11 topographic data is improved. Regarding the urban reserve areas, they would like to keep  
12 the UGA areas, but are agreeable to reserves if necessary. They can show during the next  
13 Comprehensive Plan review that the areas should be included. They've spent a lot of money  
14 in these areas on sewer and other utilities. When planning infrastructure, it's best to serve  
15 both sides of the road.

16  
17 Harper referenced question three and stated the average rate of people who have  
18 moved to Sumas in the last eight or nine years, extended another 20 years, results in a  
19 higher population than allocated. Every city in the county has seen their historic share of  
20 growth increase from the 1990's and to the 2000's. Employment numbers have also gone  
21 up. The County staff used assumed densities higher than those in the Sumas  
22 Comprehensive Plan, which means the area has less capacity. There are areas in the  
23 existing city limits that include steep slopes and historically large lots that won't subdivide,  
24 yet capacity is being counted. If the urban reserve concept stays, they won't need right  
25 now an industrial reserve to the north.

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27  
28 **OTHER BUSINESS**

29  
30 There was no other business.

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33 **ADJOURN**

34  
35 The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

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39 ~~Jill Niven, Minutes Transcription~~

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41 Please contact the Council Office to obtain an  
42 official, signed copy:  
43  
44 360-676-6690 or [council@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:council@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
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46

47  
48 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Laurie Caskey-Schreiber, Committee Chair