



Nooksack Valley Schools

"Pioneering Excellence"

Superintendent
Mark Johnson (360) 988-4754

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Whatcom County P&DS

October 12, 2009

Whatcom County Planning Commission
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

Member of the County Council and Planning Commission;

It has come to our attention that the local gravel company, Concrete Nor'west, has advocated for part of the Nooksack urban growth area (UGA) located near one of our elementary schools to be removed from the UGA. We oppose any such change to the Nooksack UGA. The Nooksack Valley School District operates three elementary schools, one in Sumas, one in Everson, and a third located on Breckenridge Road within the urban growth area of the City of Nooksack. I am writing to provide you with some of the background information regarding the selection process that led our district to construct our third elementary, located on Breckenridge Road, and to request that you retain all of the Nooksack UGA in the vicinity of this school.

Before this school was built and completed in 1998, our district went through an extensive evaluation process intended to determine where this third elementary should be built. Ultimately, we chose the Breckenridge site for a number of reasons. First and foremost, we wanted to have three "neighborhood" schools, close to the existing population's centers within our district boundaries, which are essentially our three small cities. This made it possible for many of our young students to safely walk and/or ride bikes to their school.

Second, the location within the Nooksack UGA offered us a number of benefits over a "rural" location. Certainly the city's offer to make public water available was quite attractive. Future sewer infrastructure also was a factor in our location decision. What also led to our ultimate decision was the likelihood that at some point in the future the school would be annexed into the city along with the surrounding UGA. The vision was for this area then to be developed into a very nice residential neighborhood, centered with pride around the school. Removal of this area from the UGA would significantly detract from this vision and many of the reasons we located here in the first place.

On behalf of the Nooksack Valley School District and Board of Directors, we are asking that you retain the current UGA in the vicinity of the Nooksack Elementary School. Our decision to locate the school, and our vision for the future of this school, are closely tied to the current UGA status in that area.

With Respect,

Mark Johnson