

Kate Blystone - Fwd: Re: South Yew Street UGA

From: PDS
To: David Stalheim; Kate Blystone
Date: 10/29/2009 8:06 AM
Subject: Fwd: Re: South Yew Street UGA

>>> <lee.lebowitz@comcast.net> 10/28/2009 5:53 PM >>>

To: Barbara Brenner, Whatcom County Council Member
Cc: Mayor Pike; COB Planning Department; Whatcom County Council, Planning Department/Commission

Thank you very much for your response and attempt to answer my specific questions. I certainly share your confusion over the city's intent and have not received any response from my prior comments (not these exact questions) that I submitted on the City Council's website. Although I do not have any inside knowledge or direct personal contact with any of the officials involved at either the city or county level, I would like to summarize my understanding of the current process from my examination of the public record (online documents and videos):

- 1) The City of Bellingham originally requested that status of the Yew Street UGA remain unchanged.
- 2) The County Executive proposed placing the South Yew Street portion of the current UGA in a new "UGA Reserve" category with the intent that the City would review this area over the next two years as they update the comprehensive plan.
- 3) Last month the City agreed with the temporary "UGA Reserve" status since they are not prepared to annex it yet in the next two years. (Some portions of the area have already applied to begin the annexation process and were put on hold by the City).
- 4) This month the County Planning Commission (http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/2031/pdf/PC_UGA_Rec_102209.pdf) recommended not to include UGA Reserves in the Whatcom 2031 plan and to put the area into a Rural zoning designation (which is not what the City previously agreed to).

Perhaps Mayor Pike and the City Planning Department would like to comment on the City's intent for the eventual future of the South Yew Street UGA and the other issues that you and I both raised (below).

Thanks again!

Lee Lebowitz
Bellingham

----- Original Message -----

From: BBGUN1010@aol.com
To: "lee lebowitz" <lee.lebowitz@comcast.net>
Cc: nhanson@co.whatcom.wa.us

Sent: Monday, October 26, 2009 11:51:34 PM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific
Subject: Re: South Yew Street UGA and Padden Creek Watershed

Lee,

I have been waiting to answer when I had a more definitive idea regarding where the city of Bellingham stands on this issue but am no closer to knowing. So am going to answer your questions with what I do know at this point. I will answer in bold after each question.

Barbara Brenner, Whatcom County Council Member

In a message dated 9/17/2009 9:06:36 A.M. Pacific Daylight Time, Council@co.whatcom.wa.us writes:
>>> <lee.lebowitz@comcast.net> 9/16/2009 11:11 PM >>>

To the Whatcom County Council:

The Yew Street area has been in Bellingham's UGA since 1997 (and before that in the "Urban Service Area" since the mid-1980s). The City, the Bellingham School District and property owners have all made, or are making, investments in plans, infrastructure and other improvements in the area in reliance on the UGA designation and the current urban zoning. A large number of parcels in the area have already been developed at urban density connected to city sewer and water services. The area also includes the new Wade King elementary school that was just built last year by the Bellingham School District in this location primarily because of the growth that was forecasted to occur in the Yew Street and Samish neighborhoods.

The county has proposed removing this area from the UGA and placing it in a new "UGA Reserve" category with the intent that the City would review this area over the next two years as they update the comprehensive plan. I understand that this action is being contemplated by the County because of concerns about the water quality in Lake Padden and the future development potential in this part of the Padden Watershed.

The City Planning Department believes that eventual annexation of the south Yew Street area and application of City development standards is appropriate for this area and that it should remain in the UGA. I agree with the City planners and am very concerned about lack of apparent consideration of the following questions:

1) Lake Padden Watershed: According to the maps I have seen it appears that about 90% of the Lake Padden Watershed is already incorporated in the City of Bellingham (include the Lake Padden Golf Course). Doesn't it really make more sense for the remaining sliver of the Watershed that is in the Yew Street area to also remain under City control rather than throw away a quarter century of prior planning in this area? **I would very much like to see the area be incorporated into Bellingham. It is not clear at this time if Bellingham still wants that to happen. The county just spent almost \$4M to upgrade 1500 feet in front of the new school to extremely high city standards, probably higher than many areas inside the city. Whatcom County government is supposed to be a purveyor of rural, not urban services, including road work. The road work just approved is to extremely urban standards which has taken a big bite out of our road fund and may prevent the fund from adequately doing necessary rural road work. My**

concern is if the county continues to spend the money on urban road work the city will be less inclined to annex the area because if the city waits 10 years after the county completes road work, the city does not have to pay the county back for it. Whatcom County has immense areas of rural roads that need building/repairs. We are basically a rural county and cannot afford to use up a big chunk of our road fund doing only 1500 feet so I do support annexation into Bellingham but only Bellingham can make that decision with the approval of a majority of the residents of the area.

2) Wade King Elementary School: It is my understanding that this school was built with temporary connections to City services and without adequately safe sidewalk and street access. Will the proposed zoning changes adversely affect the ability to complete the necessary infrastructure required? **I think I answered that in # 1.**

3) Yew Street Road phase 2: Widening and straightening of the remaining mile of Yew Street Road from Kingsmill to Samish has long been on the County Public Works project list. Will the proposed zoning changes adversely affect the completion of these safety improvements? **The county's budget has become precarious in the last year. That may have a negative effect on many road projects. I had definitely supported making Yew Street road safer. But the county would not have to as much to make it safer as needs to be done to make it to city standards. So I am still waiting to see if the City of Bellingham wants to annex the area. If not, the county may remove it from the UGA. Have you asked any of these questions of the city council/mayor? If so I would like to know their answers.**
I would appreciate your thoughts on these concerns.

Sincerely,
Lee Lebowitz
Bellingham