

From: Council
To: Blystone, Kate; Boxx, Becky; Council Members; Craven, Rebecca
Date: 11/2/2009 9:00 AM
Subject: Fwd: Re: Birch Bay UGA...Provisional Rezone
Attachments: BB UGA planning.doc

>>> Doralee Booth <doralee@earthlink.net> 11/1/2009 10:44 PM >>>

Thank you for your continued efforts to work with the community of Birch Bay. Thank you in advance for your consideration of the attached.

Doralee Booth
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Nov 1, 2009

To: Whatcom County Executive
Whatcom County Council
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services

From: Doralee Booth, Birch Bay, Washington

Re: The General Commercial URM24 Provisional Rezone at Alderson and Blaine Roads

It occurred to me after listening to the Council questions/discussion on Tuesday afternoon, October 20, 2009 that it might be helpful for your Birch Bay UGA planning efforts to understand some history. Specifically, how the community planning process (or lack of) occurred for the URM 24 provisional rezone around the general commercial at the intersection of Alderson and Blaine Roads.

- After the Community planning process was finished in the spring of 2004, the County Council proposed the removal of 800 acres of UR4 zoned land from Birch Point and Point Whitehorn in the Birch Bay UGA. Taking the Points out of the UGA eliminated approximately 1,241 housing units.
- To replace the housing units the County planners gave the Birch Bay Steering Committee 4 options to consider.
 1. Increase density in other portions of the Birch Bay UGA. This could be done by rezoning some UR4 areas to URM6, URM18 or Resort Commercial
 2. Expand the UGA in another area east of the current UGA,
 3. Revise the population projections and put this population into another UGA.
 4. Retain the two areas proposed for deletion from the Birch Bay UGA and designate them as Long Term Planning Areas. Develop specific conditions regarding infrastructure, storm water management and geotechnical studies that would be required prior to making them Short Term Planning Areas. After deliberation, the Birch Bay Steering Committee chose option #4 at the April 21, 2004 meeting with a vote of 8 to 3.

- Then, the County Council voted 4 to 3 to remove the 800 acres of UR4 zoned land from Birch Point and Point Whitehorn. The deleted acreage was down zoned to 1 house per 5 acres. The Birch Bay Community Plan was adopted September 28, 2004.
- The County Planners adjusted the Birch Bay Community Comprehensive Plan to accommodate the needed housing units by adding 100 acres along the Blaine Road around the general commercial at Alderson and adding the URM 24 provisional rezone.

So, to make it clear...as a result of the removal of 800 acres in the UGA the Birch Bay Steering Committee and community were not part of the “final fix” to make the housing numbers fit the population projection. The community did not craft the URM24 provisional rezone creation around the General commercial at Alderson and Blaine Roads. This was the County’s attempt to plan for Birch Bay at the end of the process in order to fix what they undid. We have yet to have a community conversation regarding the URM24 provisional rezone. It was never explained to the community...it just appeared in the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan...in other words, we don’t own it! But we do have some questions regarding what this zoning was supposed to accomplish?

- Was it a place to simply add the number of housing units needed after the removal of 800 acres from the Birch Bay UGA? Might there be a better location for this type of housing in the UGA when we have more information from the Watershed Action Plan regarding land use management?
- Was it to add affordable housing? Maximum density for URM 24 would be 96 housing units per 5 acres. Build it and they will come? We are already over supplied with RV parks. If the experiment doesn’t work will we have a slum?
- Was it intended to stop growth? How do you get some 20-property owners to work together and decide on a master plan?
- Was it an experiment to practice using TDR’s by sending growth to Birch Bay from Bellingham?

I believe the community of Birch Bay can best have this conversation and decide the future of the intersection at Alderson and Blaine Roads. The recent reviewing of the boundaries of our present UGA has seemed senseless to me from the beginning. The citizens of the Birch Bay community spent hours of time determining how we should grow. County Planners then removed 800 acres from the UGA 5 years ago, and we are now told more reductions are necessary based on some fictitious population forecast. Are we truly out of compliance after real consideration is taken for our wetlands, critical areas, buffers and protection of the Bay itself? The Birch Bay Community will revisit our Comprehensive Plan in 2011 and should have better information from the Watershed Action Plan Process to help with the many sensitive land use planning issues that face us.

We have already spent a great deal of time planning an Architectural Design Document and if you **must** plan for us then I fully endorse Kathy Berg's October 22, 2009 recommendation...

"Make the removal of the Provisional Rezone designation of the properties at the corner of Alderson Road and Blaine Road/SR548 in the Birch Bay UGA conditional on the County's adoption of the Birch Bay Design Guidelines for Commercial Development dated June 2007."

*Note: After reading Rebecca Craven's October 30, 2009 document regarding the **Birch Bay Provisional Rezone background** I am overwhelmed with just how complicated the County planning for this intersection has become. I am sure it was with good intentions but wonder how the Planning and Development staff and developers could understand and administer this plan without costing everyone time, money and their sanity! I know the community can do better. Give us a chance!

http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/2031/pdf/birchbayprovisional_20091030135600.pdf