

# Meeting Summary WHATCOM COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL

**December 3, 2008**

Whatcom Educational Credit Union (WECU)  
5659 Barrett Road  
Ferndale, WA  
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

## Welcome and Introductions

Jack Louws, Chair, welcomed participants. The following Growth Management Coordinating Council (GMCC) members were present:

### *Whatcom County*

Dewey Desler, County Executive's Office  
Sam Crawford, County Council  
Seth Fleetwood, County Council

### *City of Bellingham*

Dan Pike, Mayor  
Barbara Ryan, City Council

### *City of Blaine*

Bonnie Onyon, Mayor

### *City of Everson*

Andy Rowson, City Council

### *City of Ferndale*

Gary Jensen, Mayor

### *City of Lynden*

Jack Louws, Mayor

### *City of Nooksack*

Scott Bodven, City Council

### *City of Sumas*

Bob Bromley, Mayor

## Minutes, November 5, 2008

The November 5, 2008 GMCC meeting minutes were approved without changes.

## Land Capacity Methodology

David Stalheim, Amy Harksell, Rollin Harper, and other planning directors presented an overview of City/County Planning Directors recommendations on the land capacity methodology.

GMCC members asked several clarifying questions with staff and consultant responses as follows:

- *Is the potential for accessory dwelling units accounted for in the methodology?* Answer: No. Since it is difficult to predict how many property owners in a single family zone might be willing to pursue additions of an ADU to their property, there is not a reliable way to predict the increased density that might come from those additions.
- *Is the 2000 Census data capable of distinguishing between vacant housing units and seasonally occupied housing units?* Answer: Yes. And in areas where there are significant numbers of

seasonally occupied houses, the vacancy rate will be carefully examined to make sure it seems to be a reasonable reflection of current patterns.

- *Are vacant homes considered to be part of the future capacity?* Answer: No. The vacancy rate is assumed in the methodology to be relatively constant, not really affecting the overall capacity, so it will be important to examine the vacancy rate from the 2000 Census in each of the jurisdictions to make sure that it reasonably reflects the current and anticipated vacancy rate over the planning horizon.
- *What parts of the methodology is the distinction between single family and multi family zones (Step 25) related to?* Answer: The distinction is relevant only to an assumption about how many people live in each household. Households in multifamily units tend to be slightly smaller than 2 and households in single family units are larger. So the distinction affects only the process of converting developable acres of capacity to “people capacity”. The earlier steps used to determine the number of developable acres and the number of units planned for those acres will use the actual zoning designations for each of the zones in each of the jurisdictions.

Additionally, several adjustments were proposed and discussed by the GMCC as follows:

Step	Adjustment Requested	GMCC Recommendation
Step 4, deduct 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile of home values	<u>PD Request</u> : Change to value from 90 to 95 <sup>th</sup> percentile, except for Blaine	93 %, except for Blaine
Step 9, Deduct Slopes and Soils	<u>County Staff Request</u> : Remove alluvial fan areas from land capacity	yes
Step 24, Occupation rate assumptions	<u>County Staff Request</u> : Use local information if from credible data sources	Yes
Step 25, definition of multi-family	<u>Bellingham question</u> : Shouldn't multi-family be the same throughout all jurisdictions?	7 du/acre

Also discussed were the Whatcom County Council’s Planning and Development Committee concerns about the market factors being proposed for use in the analysis. The planning directors and GMCC members discussed market factors, and the timing, geographic scope, and basis of any possible Council changes. Two planning directors and a number of GMCC members expressed concern that while they recognized that the County Council retains authority under the law to make changes to the methodology, that they hoped that if the Council were to decide to make changes, they would:

- occur now, before the analysis takes place,
- apply County-wide, rather than making differentiations among the small cities in an attempt to reach a preferred outcome; and
- have some explanation as to the basis of any changes.

With the above adjustments to the methods, the GMCC recommended the land capacity methodology as presented by the TAG.

### **Growth Allocation Methodology**

David Stalheim, and other planning directors presented an overview of City/County Planning Directors recommendations on the growth allocation methodology

The method had been clarified since the last presentation in November, to distinguish the steps in the allocation as “Phase 1” and “Phase 2”. Phase 1 is based on a trend analysis, while Phase 2 will be based on policy choices. Also the method would look at 18 years of trends as well as the most recent 8 years. With the provision that the method accounts for 18 years of trends, the GMCC recommended the growth allocation method as presented by the TAG.

### **Review of Next Steps**

David Stalheim and the consultants reviewed the next steps regarding forthcoming allocations and alternatives development.

### **Other Business**

No other business was conducted during this meeting.