

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 17, 2009

Special Meeting

1 The Planning Commission and County Council held a joint executive session from, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., to
2 discuss pending litigation with the County's attorneys.

3
4 **Call To Order:** The meeting was called to order, by County Council Chair, Seth Fleetwood, in the
5 Whatcom County Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.

6
7 **Roll Call-Planning Commission:** Ken Mann, John Steensma, John Belisle, Jean Melious, Sean
8 Wilson, John Lesow, Rabel Burdge, David Hunter

9
10 Absent: Geoff Menzies

11
12 **Roll Call-County Council:** Barbara Brenner, Seth Fleetwood, Carl Weimer, Laurie Caskey-Schreiber,
13 Bob Kelly, Sam Crawford, Ward Nelson

14
15 **Staff Present:** David Stalheim, Kate Koch, Wain Harrison, Matt Aamot, Dean Martin, Pam Brown

16
17 **Public Hearing**

18
19 Whatcom County has determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to
20 evaluate environmental impacts associated with the 10-year review of urban growth areas throughout
21 the County. The Whatcom County Council and the Whatcom County Planning Commission will hold a
22 joint public hearing to take comments on the scope of the EIS, including the alternatives to be studied,
23 mitigation measures, and probable significant adverse impacts. Agencies, affected tribes, and
24 members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS at this hearing.

25
26 Stalheim: We are here to gather public comments on the scope of the EIS and to be prepared for the
27 review and revision of the Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) of Whatcom County. Comments regarding the
28 alternatives to be studied, mitigation measures and probable adverse impacts are appropriate at this
29 public hearing.

30
31 For many it seems that Whatcom County just went through the UGA review process. However, both the
32 Bellingham review and revision, as well as the County review process, that concluded in early 2008,
33 were based on the current Comprehensive Planning horizon year of 2022, not the 20 year planning
34 period that is required by the Growth Management Act (GMA). Whatcom County entered into a
35 stipulated agreement that the UGA review will be for the 20 year period, which would be to the year
36 2029, if completed this year. Whatcom County and the cities are required to review and revise
37 Comprehensive Plans and development regulations by December 2011. The UGA review is the first
38 step in that 2011 update process. This is why we are developing one growth forecast that will be used
39 for this UGA review and the 2011 update process.

40
41 There have been comments made that we are doing more than is required by the GMA in this UGA
42 review process. The GMA requires counties to review and revise UGAs at least every 10 years.
43 Whatcom County was required to complete this review in 2007. We are now under a Western
44 Washington Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) order to have this revision complete by
45 June 30, 2009.

46
47 The requirements in the GMA include a review of densities permitted and the extent to which growth is
48 occurring within the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the UGA. It is clear that we are
49 required to amend the Comprehensive Plan and the densities to accommodate our growth for the next
50 20 years.

51

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1 Since our current Comprehensive Plan is only to the year 2022 we need to forecast and allocate growth
2 for the next 7 to 9 years, as well as changing plans and densities as necessary to accommodate that
3 growth. As part of our action revising growth forecasts and densities to accommodate the growth we
4 must take actions that demonstrate internal and external consistency. This includes ensuring that other
5 elements of our Comprehensive Plan, such as capital facilities and transportation elements, implement
6 the UGA decision. We must also act to insure that the plan is coordinated externally with cities.
7 Whatcom County can not act alone in the UGA review process. We must consider the desire of the
8 cities for their future growth.
9

10 Tonight we are here to hear input about what is to be included within an EIS. An EIS addresses
11 proposed actions and alternatives. The proposed action is the revision of UGAs for a new 20 year
12 planning horizon and any other amendments necessary to implement that decision. An EIS describes
13 existing conditions and impacts that might occur if an alternative were implemented. An EIS addresses
14 mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate impacts as well as identifying significant, unavoidable and
15 adverse impacts of the proposed action. The period of scoping of the EIS ends tomorrow, February 18,
16 2009. The EIS will be drafted based on the final EIS scope. A draft EIS will be issued and the public will
17 have at least 30 days to comment on the draft. That draft is scheduled to be released in May of this
18 year. A final EIS is then prepared to respond to public and agency comments and will be issued prior to
19 an action by the County Council. The action of the County Council must be within the range of the
20 alternatives addressed in the EIS or additional review will be required.
21

22 The topics that are planned to be covered in the EIS include air quality, cultural resources, earth, land
23 use, shoreline use, plans, policies, plants, animals, population, employment, public services, utilities,
24 transportation and water resources.
25

26 The EIS will be drafted primarily by our consultant team, lead by ICF Jones and Stokes.
27

28 There has been a challenge to develop an alternatives approach that will be compared in this EIS.
29 There are 10 very different UGAs with many variations and issues within each of these areas. We had
30 to come up with three alternatives that could be studied and that would address the wide range of
31 alternatives. We have proposed an approach that uses the EIS process to help inform final decisions
32 and provides for a wide range of issues to be addressed in coordination with cities. The three
33 alternatives include no action, which is required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and two
34 action alternatives. The essential issues within these alternatives revolve around growth patterns rather
35 than a growth forecast. The EIS will study growth patterns that test compact versus more dispersed
36 growth patterns. Redirecting growth away from rural areas rather than a continuation of rural trends.
37 Distributing a greater share of growth to small urban communities. The growth forecast tests a small
38 band of forecasts. The no action alternative would use the existing Comprehensive Plan forecast
39 growth of 234,917 as the low end of the population projection. The high end of our analysis would be
40 the Office of Financial Management (OFM) forecast of most likely growth or their mid-range, for the
41 year 2029, of 258,448 people.
42

43 The alternatives that are derived from public input we received through public surveys last fall. In those
44 surveys more than 50 percent of the respondents stated that the Growth Management Coordinating
45 Council (GMCC) growth forecast, of 251,490, was either too little or about right. 38 percent felt that it
46 was too much. When you review the responses the concern expressed was often the type or location of
47 growth more than the rate of growth. The clear concern that was expressed in the survey was about the
48 rate of rural growth in the last 10 years. More than 62 percent state that rural growth was too much. The
49 public also expressed some strong interest in exploring moving growth away from Bellingham and into
50 other communities and small cities. While nearly 40 percent thought that Bellingham should continue to
51 be the primary job and population center, one third thought that small cities and small urban areas

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1 should become their own economic centers. Another 20 percent felt that each community should take a
2 share of the new growth.

3
4 The no action alternative that we have proposed will be studied in two parts. First, it will study the
5 adopted Comprehensive Plan and present growth forecasts using the lower population range and
6 current UGA boundaries. The no action alternative will also study the historic growth trends as they
7 might continue to the year 2031. There is a clear departure of what our current plan says should
8 happen and what is happening. There is more rural growth that has taken place than what has been
9 allocated. This rural growth is largely taken from the growth that would have otherwise gone to
10 Bellingham, but to a lesser number, other smaller urban areas.

11
12 One of the two action alternatives, that we have labeled Alternative X, has the following key features:
13 Growth is shifted out of the rural areas and into UGAs. Unlike our current plan we would study
14 additional tools to implement this objective, including larger rural lot sizes, rural lot consolidation,
15 transfer of development rights, and rezone of rural study areas to agricultural lands. In this alternative
16 Bellingham would continue to be the primary job and population center. An emphasis on infill, urban
17 densities and compact growth patterns would be studied.

18
19 The second action alternative we are labeling Alternative Y. The key features of this alternative include:
20 Bellingham growth would stay at or below historic trends and growth would be shifted to other areas.
21 We will study achieved densities in the urban areas rather than planned densities. This alternative
22 would be less infill oriented.

23
24 Our EIS study approach is to use a suitability analysis. This approach would have us analyze areas for
25 the appropriate location for urban growth. There would be four basic steps to this process. First, we
26 would develop criteria that could be mapped and/or analyzed. Second, we would use the mapping and
27 analysis to help determine appropriate locations for urban growth. Third, we would evaluate alternatives
28 based on the suitability analysis, develop mitigation measures, publish the draft EIS and obtain public
29 comments. Fourth, we would develop preferred alternatives with formal growth proposals based on the
30 analysis and public input. The suitability analysis criteria that we are proposing includes critical areas,
31 city interest, land capacity, lot patterns, alternative objectives, resource lands, service areas, land use,
32 sensitive watersheds and transportation.

33
34 We have provided the County Council and Planning Commission with background information that will
35 help frame the discussion tonight. Included in this background information are growth forecasts, initial
36 growth allocations and initial land capacity analysis results. Within those documents you will see that
37 growth forecasts and preliminary allocations show declining growth rates and allocations to all areas
38 from the current Comprehensive Plan. For example, the total urban growth rate is reduced from the
39 current Comprehensive Plan forecast of nearly 64,000 down to an urban forecast range between
40 46,000 and 57,000. Bellingham's current growth allocation is similarly reduced from 35,000 to a range
41 of 27,000 and 31,000. These numbers are based on the GMCC forecast for the County of 251,490.

42
43 The process for reviewing the UGA first began in August 2008. Our GMHB deadline is June 30, 2009.
44 The County Council has agreed to request a six month extension, but until we are granted that
45 extension we are proceeding under the assumption that we must have this work completed.

46
47 In the next two months, while the EIS is being drafted, we will work with the cities to get public input on
48 what the city UGA proposals will be. Meanwhile the County will prepare the EIS and analyze the capital
49 facilities and transportation systems necessary to demonstrate that the UGAs are adequate to
50 accommodate the urban growth expected over the next 20 years.

51

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1 In conclusion, we are asking the public to comment on the alternatives, mitigation measures and
2 probable adverse impacts to be studied in the EIS. We are asking the Planning Commission and
3 County Council to specifically address the range of alternatives to be studied in the EIS so that we can
4 proceed with this with this work.

5
6 The hearing was opened to the public.

7
8 Art Hyatt, Whatcom County: As you explore the population and density forecasts required under the
9 GMA we must ask the question, can government, local or state, be trusted to make an unbiased
10 decision? We need an honest broker, a neutral arbiter for this process. Government and the developers
11 are the primary beneficiaries of growth. The developers get their profits, government gets their revenue
12 and we the people get the bill, not only in sky high property taxes, but more pollution, more congestion,
13 higher crime, impacted critical areas and a diminished sense of community. You are the fox. You can
14 not be both the regulator and the facilitator of growth without creating the impression of corruption. This
15 is like Henry Paulson, a Wall Street banker, regulating Wall Street. He was too conflicted to be either
16 credible or effective. As is now evident this failed growth paradigm is unsustainable. The GMA needs to
17 be amended so communities aren't held hostage to the growth table. We need a new engine of
18 governance.

19
20 Wendy Harris, Whatcom County: I think that far too much emphasis is being placed on population
21 growth projections, which is only a segment of this scoping process. I think the crucial issue is really
22 land use patterns and land use planning. Population growth projections should not be used as a
23 substitute for determining, as a community, what policies and regulations need to be enacted to create
24 the type of community that we want in the future. Many people participating in this public process are
25 here because they will receive a personal or financial benefit by maximizing growth. I think it's important
26 to remember that the overwhelming majority residents who participated in the Whatcom 2031
27 questionnaire and the visioning workshops indicated a strong desire to minimize rural growth and
28 ensure the protection of our environmental resources. I am here tonight to represent the voice of this
29 majority. I urge the County Council and Planning Commission to incorporate an action alternative,
30 within the EIS, that relies on land use regulations and policies that protect our critical areas, resource
31 lands and rural areas to the maximum extent under the GMA. To reduce the current trend of growth in
32 rural areas it is crucial that the County enact growth impact fees for parks, transportation and
33 education. Unless developers are forced to pay for their share of the true costs of the growth this cost
34 will be passed along to existing residents and provide a financial incentive for rural sprawl to continue.
35 Opportunities for multi-housing dwelling units should be increased. This encourages urban infill and
36 creates affordable housing. While I understand that there are pros and cons to over planning and under
37 planning for growth I believe that the risks of over planning are much greater. We can correct a mistake
38 in planning for too little growth but we can not correct a mistake in planning for too much growth. Once
39 we destroy our critical areas and resource lands to provide for growth we have forever lost that
40 environmental resource. I think that the methodology proposed for the land capacity analysis is flawed
41 with regards to the Lake Whatcom watershed. The analysis is reflected in the scoping proposal based
42 on current land use regulations and zoning laws. However, we are mandated under federal law to
43 restore Lake Whatcom which will require more stringent land use regulations and capital facility plans.
44 Since Lake Whatcom is the source of drinking water for all of Bellingham and 50 percent of the County I
45 believe it's a serious oversight to not incorporate the TMDL requirements into the EIS. We can not plan
46 for growth without securing a safe supply of potable water. Perhaps the best solution for this problem is
47 to withdraw the Lake Whatcom Watershed from Bellingham's UGAs.

48 Lesow: I am going to try to keep track of public attitudes towards the alternatives, as they are presented
49 in the staff report and the new one, Alternative A. Do you have any preference?

50

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1 Fleetwood: We are here tonight to take testimony and not ask questions. Council typically does not
2 engage people. The concern here tonight is if we ask questions we will never get through the meeting.
3

4 Rebecca Boonstra, Whatcom County: I am only asking for two things tonight. First, I am asking that as
5 you consider the scope of the upcoming EIS to please study all of Whatcom County's UGAs as they
6 exist today. To consider LAMIRDs is not appropriate and is outside the scope of this UGA review and
7 the EIS. I am also asking you to please adopt population projections consistent with those be utilized by
8 the GMCC of 60,490 additional residents by 2031.
9

10 Clayton Petree, Whatcom County: (Gave handout to the Council and Commission) I want to note that
11 the agenda and staff memo talk about the 10 year review and the planning period for that is 2009 to
12 2029. I put a chart in here that is from OFM that shows how population is tracking with the OFM middle
13 projection. There is another year of population that has been reported, which is 191,000. It is tracking
14 exceptionally well. I colored in blue about where the population figures are being talked about are. What
15 I would really like you to notice is that all of them are below the OFM most likely projection. If you look
16 at the proposed alternatives that have been presented in the staff report all of them want to study at or
17 below the OFM most likely. I don't think that's a reasonable range to study in this EIS. You want to have
18 the most reasonable range. If you are going to study somewhere below the most likely and what is
19 actually happening you really want to study above as well in an equal proportion. Studying all of the
20 ranges doesn't have anything to do with the final number that you pick. I think that all of the action
21 alternatives should consider what happens if we plan high and grow slow and what happens if we plan
22 low and grow fast. What happens if we plan for the most likely and the most likely takes place? If we
23 make a shift in how we plan, going from Alternative X to Y, I would like to see something in the EIS that
24 talks about how long a major shift like that will take and what sort of environment impacts it may have.
25

26 Jack Petree, Whatcom: (Gave handout to the Council and Commission) Can a process like this end
27 well if we don't begin well? The key word is solid data. The GMHB, in the compliance hearing,
28 instructed the County that the law required using solid data. I would like to imagine for a moment that
29 this hearing is about a request from a developer on the Nooksack River at Nugent's Corner. Staff
30 comes to you and says we are only going to study what happens when the river is at instream flows
31 and low instream flows because we don't want it ever to flood so we won't study flooding and that will
32 keep it from flooding. Think what your reaction would be if somebody gave you a bracket like that. The
33 question is how has population tracked with most likely to occur projections? I have laid them out for
34 you. We have had four projections over the period of Growth Management. The first was in 1990. In
35 1990 the OFM projected way under what actual growth was. We exceeded the 2012 projection by
36 2003. In 1995 it projected a little under. In 2002 it projected a number and Whatcom County projected
37 under the OFM projection. As of 2007 OFM projects that the actual growth is exceeding the projected
38 by 1,821 people for the five year period. OFM has consistently underestimated actual population
39 growth. How can an EIS, that only looks at the impacts of growth below those established by law, as
40 most likely to occur and establish, by experience, as likely to be lower than actual growth, possibly be a
41 valid SEPA process? A valid EIS would utilize the most likely to occur population established by law as
42 the midpoint and then examine what happens if we get more growth than we thought we would or what
43 happens if we get less growth than we thought we would. You bracket the most likely to occur. Does
44 planning accurately for likely projections lead to more growth? The fact is that we have under projected
45 for three planning cycles in a row and we have had growth exceeding that growth by a long way. We
46 continue to see the impacts of that. It's not solid data to use data that both the County and consultants
47 agree is flawed to justify this. It's not using solid data to purport to be reviewing growth from 1997 to
48 2008 and not have a word in the documentation about what actually happened during that time. It's not
49 solid data to count thousands of housing units on land that's not zoned to accept them. In conclusion,
50 can an EIS, only examining environmental impacts less severe than those defined by law as most likely

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1 to occur, be compliant with the law? If you actually go along with that are you going to allow private
2 projects the same latitude when they do an EIS?

3
4 Mary Dickinson, Governmental Affairs Director for the Building Industry Association of Whatcom County
5 (BIAW), Whatcom County: We want to publicly thank the Whatcom County Council and Planning
6 Commission for encouraging this public hearing. It's refreshing that some members of our County
7 government have not forgotten the Washington State GMA requirements for continuous public
8 participation. In the past the Planning Commission has expressed concern over last minute
9 contributions of testimony, especially written testimony. We apologize for our late submission but we
10 must point out that all of the pieces for this public were not available on Whatcom County's website until
11 last Thursday afternoon, February 13, 2009. In addition with this past weekend being President's Day
12 holiday weekend we would venture to guess that many members of the public were engaged in other
13 activities. These types of activities, over a holiday weekend, frustrated our County's last 10 year review
14 process and lead to the County stipulating to the GMHB that it did not complete the process correctly.
15 In terms of the EIS we are not prepared, at this time, to advocate for any particular scope of the
16 proposed EIS. It would not be responsible for us to comment on a scoping document based on data
17 that even the County agrees is not yet complete and accurate. However, we are confused of how this
18 EIS process is being proposed. Particularly, we are confused because, although we don't believe this is
19 the intent, it appeared in the text that the County is deciding which option to plan the EIS to examine
20 when in fact all alternatives need to be studied, particularly the no action alternative. In terms of rural
21 lands we want to express dismay that the County is using the fact that its 10 year UGA process, which
22 they are out of compliance on, as an excuse to further explore the opportunity to downzone the entire
23 rural County. The County should first strongly examine why the current UGAs and future UGAs, like the
24 five year review are from the City of Bellingham, are not being built on and go from there. One fiction of
25 GMA, that occurs constantly, is that there absolutely could be no building or development in the
26 unincorporated county for residential purposes and that's not true. In addition the Washington State
27 Court of Appeals has established that a five acre parcel is decidedly rural density. Another legal fiction
28 of GMA is that population projections are like enrollment or admission numbers. In that scenario once a
29 community sets a goal to be reached and once it's reached the door is closed until people leave. That's
30 not true. We want to remind you that GMA must be realistic and the GMCC has stated there are over
31 6,000 pending building permits in the City of Bellingham. This is not true. These types of assertions are
32 at best conjecture and at worst fraud and we ask that you don't submit them because that could open
33 the County up to litigation.

34
35 Darcy Jones, Jones Engineering, Whatcom County: In reviewing the EIS and some of the other
36 material it occurred to me that I'm not quite sure what the project is of the EIS. We have some
37 alternatives, but I don't know exactly what the project is. It seems that the alternatives are set around
38 population management. It seems we need to take a step back. Maybe we want to establish what our
39 priorities are. What do we want to preserve? What communities do we want to preserve? What
40 environment resources do we want to preserve? What industry base and business base do we want to
41 preserve? What housing stock do we want to preserve? Maybe there are some alternatives. I know we
42 want to establish the UGAs. This has been the most amazing mathematical problem I have seen in the
43 last five years. It's a big math quiz. I think we want to take a softer look in this EIS. Regarding the
44 population projections we do need to plan ahead for the most likely scenario. If that isn't achieved by
45 the target year then you haven't necessarily lost anything. You have set aside land for homes, schools,
46 business, industry, medical facilities, etc. and that doesn't necessarily promote growth. There are a lot
47 of other policies you can have to protect the environmental issues and to promote growth in the right
48 directions when it needs to occur. People argue that we should plan for a lower population and keep
49 monitoring things. A lot of communities have tried that but for the most part they don't really end up
50 being affordable but end up being an elitist community. These types of communities are conducive to

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1 business or industry. Don't let the current economic downturn dissuade you right now. Don't be short
2 sighted. I believe things will get better and we should plan on that.

3
4 Janice Schuch, Whatcom County: I am here as a long time member of the North Bellingham
5 Community Association. I am speaking because of some proposed maps I saw that show Ferndale's
6 UGA moving to the east. This unincorporated area, east of I-5 is not suitable for urban development. It
7 is currently zoned RR1 and RR2. Almost all of that is already built up. The only way to ever get urban
8 density would be infilling within what already exists. This is uncalled for when the County's own
9 projections show that Ferndale has more buildable lots available than any other area. Ferndale needs
10 to decrease its UGA rather than extend them. The area east of Ferndale has three salmon spawning
11 streams. Deer Creek, Ten Mile and Silver Stream. There are extensive critical areas and flooding that
12 often cuts them off from the Ferndale area. This rural area no longer has an elementary school and one
13 of its two markets is closing proving that it is a small rural area with farms, not urban. The area west of
14 Ferndale, which is being shown on the map to be taken out of the UGA has been in the UGA for at
15 least 10 years. The owners in this area have been counting on that development potential and the
16 income the UGA density would give them on their investments. The Ferndale School District has
17 followed this long range planning of the City of Ferndale and built its newest elementary school in this
18 area and has land there for its potential new high school addition. This area is high and dry and suitable
19 for building. I ask the County to leave Ferndale's UGA alone to the eastern direction. The residents of
20 the North Bellingham area scream loudly. It seems that these changes to the UGA may be a County
21 proposal and the residents of this area do not want the change there.

22
23 Jayne Urlig, Whatcom County: My concern in this whole process is the quality of life for all of Whatcom
24 County and preserving this quality of life that we have in both our urban and rural communities. I would
25 like to bring up something that is not usually brought up at this level. Usually at this level of the EIS we
26 talk about a broad stroke and then at the program and policy level we start talking about the details.
27 One thing that is very critical, that I think we would all have an open mind about as we proceed, is that
28 there is a tremendous amount of research data that bears out that light and noise pollution has a
29 significant unavoidable and adverse impacts on not only human life, but also on plant and animal life. In
30 terms of light pollution adverse impacts on plants are that it can delay ??? in the fall to an appreciable
31 amount that the trees do not go into dormancy and at the time of cold or wind or ice storm these are the
32 trees that will most likely snap and fall on transmission lines and buildings and can cause damage to
33 structures and even loss of life. In the spring sometimes we have bud break early, again causing tender
34 growth, die back, decreasing overall tree vigor. This again increases windfall, downfall, subsequent
35 erosion, land slides, etc. In terms of insects, bird life and mammals, light and noise both affect these in
36 a huge, huge way. It disrupts biological behavior and in migration periods. They are delayed which
37 causes a decrease in hummingbirds, bats, etc. It doesn't take much to have an impact. If we don't look
38 at this stroke at the beginning then it will be too late to mitigate or prevent those impacts in the rest of
39 our community. We all breathe the air and we are all affected by the light and noise pollution so please
40 consider it now.

41
42 Barb Casort, Whatcom County: I live in the area that is being considered to be expanded into the City
43 of Ferndale. My property has flooded to 10 feet deep. To consider that area for development is not
44 reasonable. To think of that as an area that would be considered is not a responsible thing to consider.
45 I bought the farm so that people who are living in the city and living in apartments can come and learn
46 to do farming and understand that food doesn't grow in a grocery store. I would like Ferndale to
47 consider being where Ferndale is now and to consider their growth to the west because our area is not
48 an area that should be in the city.

49
50 Crawford: I believe we need some clarification regarding what is being proposed for the City of
51 Ferndale.

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1 Stalheim: When the County and city staff were working on the range of EIS alternatives we were
2 looking at different approaches. One approach was to study areas that might be included and areas
3 that might be excluded from consideration for UGAs. I believe that is the reference that the last two
4 people have spoken to. This is discussion staff had been having but it was put out to the public at one
5 of the Ferndale meetings. The approach that we are doing right now is just to study the suitability of
6 each of these areas for urban growth or not. There are not any proposals on the table.
7

8 Lincoln Rutter, Whatcom County: I would like to suggest that there needs to be an economic foundation
9 to any population projection. The problem with that is that we are all aware that a recession or
10 depression destroys that economic foundation. I hope it's not news to people that we are in one of
11 those situations right now. By their nature a recession or a depression is a spiraling event. It will
12 continue to eat away at that economic foundation until something acts to arrest that process. As
13 evidence of that I would like to suggest that during the entire decade of the 1930's the Roosevelt
14 administration incurred an annual deficit of over 400 billion dollars annually. We are all familiar with the
15 CCC, WPA, etc. There is wide agreement among economists that it did nothing to stop the depression.
16 It wasn't until 1941, with the outbreak of the WWII that the government deficit reached 2.8 trillion
17 dollars. That caused full employment to be regained. I would like to recommend that the U. S.
18 Government appreciate the fact that the spiral is occurring. I have faith in the common man and I
19 believe that if you all drive around and look at these UGAs and the sprawl that has occurred in places
20 like Birch Bay and Blaine there are rural ghost towns for you to witness where there are 650 lots that
21 were part of a subdivision and there is not a single house in the subdivision. What I am asking is that
22 the EIS, the economic scope of this document involve some common sense in terms of looking around,
23 within our County, and quantifying the number of existing homes for sale, the number of plats that are
24 unoccupied and the degradation to the local economy that has occurred. You can drive through
25 downtown Bellingham and see the number of offices for lease. It's an ignorant policy to make forecasts
26 that are based on anything other than economic reality. I would urge you to use your own common
27 sense to do your own research because there is a direct correlation between the size of a UGA and the
28 amount of taxes it takes to pay for the public infrastructure that has to support that larger geographic
29 region. The population projection you pick should be the minimum in order that we act to preserve the
30 disposable income of the people that are going to be required to start consuming again if we are to get
31 out of this economic problem that we are in.
32

33 Dave Pros, Whatcom County: I want you to include in the EIS the 220,000 population projection that is
34 allowed by OFM. None of the population numbers or allocations has had a public hearing. The GMA
35 requires the public be involved early and continuously. We are now 8 months into this process with 16
36 weeks to go and this is the first public hearing that there has been on this issue. The alternatives have
37 not had any public vetting. They have all been discussions among planning people, but no one has
38 gone out into the public and asked us what we want. We have had no discussions on growth models.
39 Growth models will tell us the whole story of where we want to have growth go. The highest percentage
40 of people asked in the workshop want to have the small towns become their own economic centers.
41 This answers a lot of questions about transportation, etc. There is no cost analysis. We don't know how
42 much X or Y is going to cost. I have an Alternative A. Using the lowest population projection will cost
43 the least. That is important for us taxpayers to know. We are the ones that foot the bill on all of this. We
44 know that land use ordinances control how we grow. There are consequences to taking on a number
45 that is too high. We are supposed to be planning which means we are supposed to be proactively
46 engaging in those activities that will accommodate those people. In this kind of economy or any kind of
47 economy please take the lowest number. More than likely this number is going to be good for the next
48 12 months. 12 months from now we are going to be in 2011 when we are supposed to be doing
49 planning for 2031. I asked Mr. Bricklin if 22 years was just as wrong as 18 years and his indication was
50 yes. If the Planning Department can't tell us what our costs are then I think it's imperative that we go
51 with the lowest number and plot that course. Historic trends is the basis for the number that they have

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1 given. Historic trends are only relevant if we want to continue to make the mistakes of the past. That's
2 what those numbers represent. This is a new age. We have grown a certain amount. This is a new
3 Council that is being very careful about growth. We need to be looking at the lowest cost for these next
4 11 months. Have a countywide discussion about various issues including growth models and do a
5 proper visioning and come up with the proper population projection for the next 22 years.
6

7 Carole MacDonald, Whatcom County: I would recommend that you study all Whatcom County UGAs,
8 as they exist today. Under the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan consideration of LAMIRD
9 alternatives are not appropriate and are outside the scope of this UGA review and the EIS. I would also
10 ask you to please adopt population projections consistent with those being utilized by the GMCC of
11 60,490 additional, minimum, residents by 2031.
12

13 Lou Piotrowski, Whatcom County: I am from Glacier and I want to attest to some of the growth that is
14 happening in a rural unincorporated area. I was on the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee
15 (FSPAC). We found that there were 895 houses that are in Glacier as of 2006. I know that many
16 houses have been built there now. At that time we only had a full time occupancy rate of less than 15
17 percent. That left a lot of houses that were either vacant or seasonal. Many are now being sold as full
18 time occupancies. With that many people I don't want to see Glacier become a UGA. I don't think
19 anybody really wants to see that happen. I want to try and figure a way to look at how we might move
20 growth some place else. A lot of people are coming and I would like to see people go into the UGAs. I
21 would like to see us with an anticipated growth rate of 50,000 to 60,000 people over the next 20 years. I
22 can't imagine why anyone would want to close down the UGAs. We need to look at all of the UGAs we
23 have and make them as attractive as we possibly can. I would request that none of the alternatives
24 include any kind of action that would result in the rescinding of any UGA status in Whatcom County.
25 Any such action would be outside the scope of the EIS. Only study the UGAs that are currently in
26 operation and identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Since the EIS is only concerned with the current
27 UGAs rural areas should remain outside the scope. I don't think that making any place a LAMIRD, that
28 has urban density, allows the tools necessary to do good planning.
29

30 Norma Otto, Whatcom County: I agree with Lou, Carole and Rebecca. I would like to make sure that
31 the scoping of the EIS is just about the UGAs as they exist today. Please don't consider any LAMIRD
32 alternatives. I would like to ask that you remember that the Columbia Valley UGA is really urban and
33 not rural density at all. I am happy with the population figure the GMCC has been recommending.
34

35 Max Perry, Whatcom County: I live on Northwest Road, where we have Deer Creek, Ten Mile Creek
36 and Barrett Lake that flow into the Nooksack River. We are not conducive to Ferndale growth. I
37 recommend that Ferndale look to the north and west for growth.
38

39 Richard Banel, Whatcom County: The EIS should study Whatcom County's UGAs as they exist today in
40 the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. I support adopting the population projections
41 adopted by the GMCC. Consideration of the Columbia Valley UGA as it currently exists or as
42 envisioned in the Foothills Subarea Plan is suitable under the no action alternative X and or alternative
43 Y scenarios. There should be inclusion of alternatives contemplating the rural element, as this is a
44 separate issue and should remain outside the scope of the EIS. I support retaining the UGA in the
45 Columbia Valley.
46

47 Michael Chiavario, Whatcom County: When I was a student at Western in 1969 there was a guest
48 lecturer who came to talk to us about this new concept called *Pugetopolis*. I had only lived in
49 Bellingham for about a year at that time and I thought it was interesting but I didn't know what he was
50 talking about. Now I do know what he was talking about. Just this year a fellow named Knute Berger is
51 touring western Washington with his book. The book is called *Pugetopolis*. It is happening and we all

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1 know it. There was a Bellingham Herald article, just yesterday, that said the rate of global warming was
2 recently found to be three times faster than it was projected to be in the last decade. Sea level is rising
3 faster in many places, .8 inches per year. The Governor's Puget Sound Task Force has let us know
4 that our sound is critically in danger. The members of that task force, who have put forward a plan to go
5 forward, are telling us that they don't know how we are going to fix this problem, because it is so
6 severe. All of these problems are related to develop issues like the reduction of forests and impervious
7 surfaces, which are all things that go along with increased development. You all know that citing a low
8 population figure will result in reduction of the development impacts like forest reduction and impervious
9 surface reduction. This is what I want you to do. Set the lowest number please. This isn't a radical step.
10 Some people would like you to believe it is and that it's not planning properly. I believe it is a prudent
11 and moderate step and one of many that we are going to have to make over the next decade. As the
12 reality of the impending environmental catastrophe becomes more apparent and erases our collective
13 denial we are going to eagerly take further steps that would indeed seem radical now. Alternatives X, Y
14 and A will be horribly short sighted.

15
16 Max Duncan, Whatcom County: I have a few facts and quotes from the EIS. "A significant portion of
17 runoff that originates in the Columbia Valley percolates the subsurface as groundwater recharge.
18 Course grain sands and gravels that are at the surface serve as a parent material for the highly
19 permeable topsoil. Infiltration rates are high. Water levels are generally less than 30 feet below the
20 ground surface. Groundwater flow direction is to the south. The average linear velocity is 4.4 feet per
21 day. Groundwater discharges to Kendall, Sprague Lake, Kendall Creek and likely the Nooksack River."
22 My layman's version sounds something like this, it rains a lot here. We need that rainwater to soak in
23 and recharge our groundwater and if there are sources of pollution, anywhere in the Columbia Valley, it
24 is very likely these pollutants will wind up in our groundwater supply. I am a lucky man. I teach at
25 Kendall Elementary School, which means I get paid to work with the most precious resources in that
26 community. That resource is, of course, our children. Those children drink the water from the
27 downstream end of the Columbia Valley 176 days per year for all seven years of their elementary
28 education. Out of this group a significant number drink water from the Kendall Creek watershed at
29 home and at school. I do not speak for the school district, but I certainly speak for the needs of my son,
30 who is one of those children who both goes to school and live down stream. I also speak for one of the
31 great things that the Pacific Northwest is known for. It's a place where the water runs clear and the fish
32 live in it. I was disappointed that the EIS did not address fish and wildlife but it certainly does address
33 the water. I want to lend a voice to the importance of having plenty of good clean water and that is
34 particularly true for those who are young and developing and do not yet have a voice in the area that
35 will leave for them. I agree with the gentleman that recently spoke, that another way of addressing this
36 is by looking at the lowest population projections. Even under the most optimistic scenarios I think that
37 will offer far fewer jobs and services than it will ever attract compared to the residents. I don't think
38 there are any provisions to pay for increased services required by increased population and low
39 projections just make sense in a number of ways. I just saw this alternative A. I like the looks of this out
40 of any of the alternatives I have seen so far.

41
42 Everett Hatfield, Whatcom County: I moved out there because it was an urban area. My comment is I
43 hope you will consider keeping the towns in a circle. Keep the urban area as much as you can.

44
45 RobRoy Graham, Whatcom County: I am a Fire Commissioner for Fire District #14, which would
46 provide service to the UGA in the Columbia Valley. Fire District #14 is at a critical point with regard to
47 providing service to the citizens of our district. We are currently working with ideas to continue to
48 provide the level of service our citizens have come to expect utilizing volunteer staff that presently
49 exists. We are working with techniques such as assigning duty nights, rotating shifts and recruiting
50 more staff to respond to the 450 plus calls a year that Kendall, alone, responds to. The addition of 250
51 to 300 homes, in a UGA, would require Fire District #14 to move to paid staff to meet additional

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1 demand. Funding for staff would need to be raised through additional taxing of our citizens. Failure of
2 passage in these difficult times would place the burden on our system that could only be met through
3 mutual aid responses from distant stations resulting in an increased response times. I ask you to
4 consider the volunteer nature of District #14 when you consider growth brought about by the UGA.

5
6 Bill Bliss, Whatcom County: I own property on the east end of Van Wyck and Horton Road, east of the
7 Guide Meridian. I am glad to see that your EIS study is going to include transportation and capital
8 improvements as two of its key factors. I think those are critical to planning for the growth of Whatcom
9 County and considering all of Whatcom County. In the previous UGA planning, that was undertaken by
10 both the City of Bellingham and the County, my 20 acres and the 60 acres west of my property was in
11 all of the UGA plans up until the County Council meeting in February 2008. At that time even with the
12 low growth projections my property was included in the proposed UGA for the King Mountain area. At
13 that time the property, north of Van Wyck Road was excluded from the UGA and 228 acres was taken
14 into the King Mountain UGA area. The decision was made based on the area required and the fact that
15 the dividing line for the Mt. Baker School District and Bellingham was the Van Wyck Road, not Horton
16 Road. It was shortsighted in a couple of areas. One is, that transportation is key regardless of what
17 proposal you take, even today with no growth. I'm sure all of you have experienced the traffic
18 congestion on the Guide. That traffic is getting people in and out of Bellingham. A corridor east of the
19 Guide Meridian, from Horton Road to the Sunset area, as is proposed to come down James Street
20 Road and across the west side of King Mountain, past my property and on to Horton Road would
21 enable a good traffic corridor east of the Guide Meridian. By not including that last 60 acres in the UGA
22 you have basically blocked that transportation corridor. There is no way to get the traffic out of the King
23 Mountain UGA area to the north. There is no way to get traffic from east of Bellingham into Bellingham.
24 The closing of the Bakerview fire station, with the recent annexations, has raised the fire code in my
25 area from 6 to 10. My fire insurance rates have gone up. I would encourage you to include that 80
26 acres back in the UGA.

27
28 Phil Cloward, Whatcom County: I would like to give you some perspective. I first came to Whatcom
29 County, to work, in 1956. Off and on through the years I have worked here and I have also lived here. I
30 traveled to work here and I liked it so I moved here. I have a syndrome, just like everybody else does,
31 you can call it Pugetopolis, or whatever, but basically let's not plan in a vacuum. I know you don't get
32 governed in a vacuum. In 1957 I could drive down the Columbia Valley, in September, and couldn't see
33 my hand in front of my face because of the smoke from the ??? . Let's not be doomsday just because
34 we had people come and live here. There are positive things and we can, through good management
35 and good government and good planning, have our cake and live here too. Don't live in a vacuum and
36 pick the lowest figure just because it's easy and convenient. You need to look at preserving the UGAs
37 the way they are. I don't think there is any place to be throwing in LAMIRDs as a substitution for UGAs.
38 Let's have good planned growth and not ignore it. It will bite us and that's what's been happening.

39
40 Bill Vaught, Whatcom County: I live on the Mt. Baker Highway at mile post 16. I ask you to envision, for
41 a moment, small streams trickling down saturated Sumas Mountain. Then the rains begin. By early
42 evening of the second day the intensity of the rain increases causing the innocent stream to become
43 swollen and then a raging torrent of silt laden brown water. The power becomes greater with the
44 addition of gravel tearing at the banks on its decline down a 35 percent grade from a distance of two
45 miles. The bombardment continues on rootballs of cut trees and then non-harvested trees close to the
46 swollen torrent. Now the actions of the water and its contents carve into the stream bed exposing huge
47 boulders, some the size of small automobiles. The boulders become dislodged from the mountain side
48 and increase the potent mix cascading uncontrollably down the steep grade. It has now become a full
49 blown land slide. As it approaches the more level terrain the mixture spreads out for several hundred
50 yards wide, tearing at everything in its path for a distance of approximately one-half mile. This stream
51 now becomes a series of streams following the path of least resistance toward the more level terrain.

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1 As the force of the slide abates the area is inundated with spear shaped tree trunks, mud and those
2 huge boulders. This happened on the Mt. Baker Highway at mile post 16 on January 8, 2009, at 3:30 in
3 the morning. Fortunately no lives were lost but a few structures were damaged. The landscape was
4 devastated and the land will remain scarred for some time. In township 40, range 5E, section 21, the
5 same as the footprint for the proposed Balfour Village, exists the east side of Sumas Mountain, with
6 some of those 35 percent grades. Maps of geological hazard sites indicate the presence of alluvial fans
7 on those very same slopes and the terrain below them. The effect of a slide, with the same magnitude,
8 would border the catastrophic given the closeness of homes proposed for that area. Are the wishes of a
9 few, who have a substantial vested interest in a high density development, more great than the moral
10 issue of responsible development and the welfare of the unsuspecting? Responsible development does
11 not place families in areas of potential harm. The Council has a moral obligation to the overall welfare
12 of the citizens of this county. By protecting the rural atmosphere you achieve this obligation.

13
14 Dan McShane, Whatcom County: I have five areas that I hope would be considered in the scope of
15 your analysis. One is for the rural areas. I would like to see a separation out of the truly rural areas from
16 the LAMIRDS and how you evaluate the alternatives. I think there is a lot of confusion about what is
17 going on in the rural areas and not recognizing that some of that is actually in LAMIRDS that exist.
18 Under the EIS analysis please include alluvial fans and go beyond just the published information. There
19 is a lot of new information that just occurred this winter. The areas covered by alluvial fans are larger
20 than the maps indicate. Evaluate the ability of delivering services in a cost effective manner. I think in
21 the last round you had, with the City of Bellingham, there were certain areas that the cost effectiveness
22 of delivering services to some of those areas needs clarification. Lake Whatcom is specifically
23 mentioned as a sensitive area but please do not forget Lake Padden. 75 percent of the Lake Padden
24 watershed is within the current Bellingham UGA. Urbanizing Lake Padden isn't a good idea. It's a much
25 more sensitive lake than Lake Whatcom and it will have oxygen problems. When looking at both lakes
26 also consider phosphorous, not just stormwater. The DOE manual does not go far enough in mitigating
27 the impacts of stormwater. In the suitability study area there is an area I would be interested in seeing
28 how it played out. It is the area between Bellingham's UGA western boundary and the floodplain of the
29 Nooksack River. It's immediately adjacent to land that is zoned industrial so it will be next to a job
30 center. It's not in an agricultural zone but essentially a LAMIRD that needs to be analyzed. I am curious
31 why that's left out and preference is given to areas north of Bellingham.

32
33 Eric Hirst, on behalf of Futurewise Whatcom, Whatcom County: We urge you to recommend the lowest
34 feasible population projection, which is roughly 220,000 people in 2031. We think the most important
35 thing you could do, in terms of guiding the EIS, is to make sure that at least one of the alternatives
36 considered includes a low population projection. You can't really adopt a population projection that falls
37 outside of that considered in the EIS. The proposal from staff has a very narrow range of population,
38 less than 10 percent. We would recommend that you eliminate alternative Y and replace it with
39 alternative X, but instead of the population of 258,000 use, instead, a population of 220,000 then you
40 really have a robust range to look at and some substantial information about the environmental,
41 economic and social impacts of different population growths. There are 10 reasons why we favor a low
42 population projection. Perhaps the most important is that we think the population projection should
43 reflect policy. That is the vision that we, the citizens and the County Council, have for the future of
44 Whatcom County. It's not just past trends or a technical exercise. It's an opportunity for you to exercise
45 your judgment and your policy wisdom. Although several speakers mentioned the importance of the
46 OFM medium forecast, the law allows you to pick any population number within the very broad OFM
47 range, which is roughly 220,000 up to 330,000. Nothing requires you or encourages you to pick
48 anything like the mid range. The citizens strongly favor slower growth. The workshops and surveys that
49 the County did last fall show that almost 50 percent thought that the GMCC recommendation was too
50 high compared with 30 percent who thought it was too low.

51

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1 John Flarry, Whatcom County: In preparation for tonight I got on the computer and downloaded a map
2 of Ferndale's UGA. The Ferndale UGA goes from Slater Road, at the south, to past Grandview Road,
3 at the north. If you look at the City of Ferndale it covers about ¼ of the UGA area for the City. I'm told
4 that Blaine occupies about 1/10 of the Blaine UGA. I think we need to look at this in terms of common
5 sense. I drive to work everyday, past Skyview Estates, in Ferndale. It's a development that has been
6 there for about 2 ½ years and can accommodate about 80 houses. Right now there are 3 houses. The
7 City of Ferndale expanded its water and sewer to accommodate developments like this. The citizens of
8 Ferndale are spending a lot of money on their water and sewer bills to pay for it. I understand that the
9 UGA was based on the medium range population projection. If the medium population range projection
10 can make Ferndale's UGA four times bigger than what it shows today, and can accommodate growth
11 for the next 20 years, there is something wrong. I think what we need to be doing is looking at the lower
12 population projection. We need to focus on compact growth patterns. I would like to suggest alternative
13 A-1 which would focus growth in the larger cities along the I-5 corridor, namely, Ferndale, Blaine and
14 Bellingham. Let the rural communities and urban areas stay rural and small.

15
16 Laura Leigh Brakke, Whatcom County: I would like to urge the preservation of farmland, as a priority. I
17 would like us to do the math and find out how many small organic farmers it would take to feed the
18 220,000 people we are going to plan for. I would like us, as a county, to be maybe the first county in the
19 United States to grow and provide all of the food for our residents without having to ship it. I think we
20 could do that. We also need to do the math and find out how many empty units and lots we have. There
21 are a lot of places being built. We need to protect clean water and clean air. We need to support the
22 Pacific salmon. We were one of a few places, in the whole world, that at one time had all five Pacific
23 salmon returning. We can't say that now. What will it take to get that back?

24
25 Lynnea Flarry, Whatcom County: I am here from Futurewise and a concerned citizen. I favor alternative
26 A. I would like to urge you to choose the lowest population number for projected population. Right now I
27 am extremely concerned, and I have been for some time, about the amount of our rural land that keeps
28 getting encroached upon ever more and more by development. In the mid 1980's we lost 500 acres
29 annually. Around 2000 we lost 2,000 acres that was converted from rural and ag use to urban usage. At
30 this rate what will my grandkids have to look for in Whatcom County other than just urban sprawl, more
31 pavement and impervious surfaces? I think we need to draw the line now. Every time we increase the
32 UGAs we lose more of this very precious commodity, our rural lands. When we extend UGAs we are
33 moving the cities and putting them in very difficult situations because their pockets are empty. Our cities
34 don't have money to go ahead and provide the infrastructure needed for extended UGAs. We need to
35 put in policies that will help make the lowest possible population growth happen. Take the incentives
36 out of moving out into the rural areas. Let's get impact fees in place. Let's encourage people to live in
37 the cities instead of sprawling out into our very precious farm and forestry lands. I was interested to find
38 that there is already enough available land in our present UGAs to accommodate growth for the next 20
39 years. Ferndale is 4 times larger than it needs to be. Blaine is 10 times larger than it needs to be. Our
40 housing boom has busted. Do we want to expand the UGAs in case we might need them some day?
41 Let's monitor our UGAs and adjust them if we need. We can always add another room to our house,
42 but if our house is huge how do we shrink it down?

43
44 Jan Eskola, Whatcom County: I support using the lowest population projection possible, 220,000. It
45 seems every time a staff report comes out the projections increase. This is just not right. I urge the
46 County Council to listen to and respect the wishes of the public that consistently request you to choose
47 the low projections. I support Dave Pros' alternative A, which encourages growth in all cities,
48 discourages growth in the rural areas and utilizes only the 220,000 population projection. I also support
49 the Planning Commission's 5-2 vote that converts the Columbia Valley UGA to a LAMIRD. This is the
50 best alternative for this rural area and I urge the County Council to confirm this vote. UGAs should not
51 be in rural areas. They belong and should be located around cities.

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1 Wyburn Bannerman, Whatcom County: I live near the intersection of Valley View and Grandview
2 Roads. I have 90 acres there. I am speaking for my neighbor, also, who has 90 acres there. What are
3 we to do with our land? My neighbor has the unfortunate thing of having a small, three month stream
4 that runs through the corner of his property. The EPA person drove by the Grandview Road one day,
5 saw a cow near that stream and sent him a letter saying he was going to get fined \$10,000 a day if he
6 didn't keep his cows away from that little stream. The County followed that up with another letter, three
7 days later, saying it was only going to be \$1,000 per day for the County. He has been working with
8 them for two years. He has fenced off all of the streams. Right now he has 30 head of cattle and they
9 allow him five acres, of his 95 acres, to work with in the winter. What should he do with this land? There
10 used to be 200 to 300 dairy farms on that Ferndale hill. There are two left. Pretty soon those two will be
11 gone. What do you expect us to do with this property if we can't have cattle on it or dairy farms? This
12 could be done in Lynden, but they keep expanding out and taking the good land away. Ferndale hill
13 should be left to a rural type living of five acre lands. It doesn't flood and has great views. I would like to
14 protect my property from being down zoned.

15
16 Heather Swanson, Whatcom County: I support some combination of alternative X and A, whichever
17 alternative is going to put urban growth in existing urban areas. I generally agree with Dave Pros and
18 his comments. I urge you to allow the lowest allowable population projections. I don't think it's short
19 sighted to determine, through a public visioning process, what we want to preserve in our communities
20 and in our county. We need to enact land use ordinances to back up the projections. In the end it's the
21 ordinances that are going to achieve what we decide we want to achieve. We should be looking to
22 manage growth through policy, not simply to encourage it. The GMA clearly states that its primary goal,
23 relating to urban growth, is quote "To encourage development where adequate public facilities and
24 services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner." To this end we need to use every tool in the
25 box, including converting non-city UGAs to LAMIRDs.

26
27 Heather Wolf, Whatcom County: I represent S.C. Goshen and Holly Associates, who own land in the
28 Columbia Valley UGA. We are asking that review of the Columbia Valley UGA, in the EIS, be limited to
29 the existing UGA and that recommended by the Foothills Subarea Committee. The LAMIRD alternative
30 should not be included in the EIS. It's not a viable alternative for this area. I want to clear up some
31 misconceptions about LAMIRDs. A LAMIRD is not a growth planning tool. It's used to draw a boundary
32 around pre-existing development. Creating a LAMIRD in the Columbia Valley is not a solution to lack of
33 employment opportunities and services in this area. If the Columbia Valley UGA is withdrawn these
34 types of services can not develop in this area. The proposed LAMIRD boundary is drawn around the
35 existing residential development. Therefore, in order for commercial and industrial uses to develop in
36 this area some of the existing residential land would need to be eliminated. This does not make any
37 sense. It's important to understand that LAMIRDs can not be expanded to create new commercial and
38 industrial uses. This is because the GMA encourages these types of uses in UGAs. Creation of a
39 LAMIRD in the Columbia Valley will encourage exactly the type of rural sprawl that the GMA is
40 designed to prevent. This is because the many residents of the Columbia Valley will need to travel to
41 outlying areas for employment and other commercial opportunities. The reason it's important for you to
42 make this decision now is so that we don't go further along this path of a LAMIRD. What needs to
43 happen in the Columbia Valley is good planning. That means drawing a logical boundary around the
44 UGA and further planning through adoption of a subarea plan.

45
46 Amy Mower, Whatcom County: I am speaking tonight on behalf of Foothills Friends. We support the
47 OFM lowest population projection of approximately 220,000 people. We urge the Council to listen to the
48 public input from public surveys and workshops. The largest number of participants urge that you
49 choose projections lower than the 251,000 suggested by the GMCC. We support Dave Pros' alternative
50 A. In this time of economic crisis it would be irresponsible to choose otherwise. Foothills Friends urges
51 that if the Columbia Valley were to stay a UGA it should be part of the EIS process along with all other

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1 UGAs in the County. The Columbia Valley needs a complete EIS, not merely the 2008 SEIS. The 2008
2 SEIS did not include many of the issues addressed in the scoping document for the 10 year UGA
3 review. One jumps out, air quality. That is a big health issue in the Columbia Valley. Particulate matter
4 and wood stove smoke hangs over the valley during temperature inversions. The County did not look
5 into this issue in 2008. Along with the rest of the UGAs air quality must be reviewed for Columbia
6 Valley. There are other new EIS issues listed in the letter we submitted to you. There are many issues
7 that should have been included in the 2008 SEIS but were not. For example, the completion of a
8 pending investigation of an old landfill. A quantitative groundwater analysis. The LOS capacity of
9 County and State roads, not merely intersections. We urge you to address these and the other points
10 listed in the letter. The most important issues for Foothills Friends were addressed in our earlier letters.
11 We support the Planning Commission's 5-2 vote to convert the Columbia Valley UGA to a LAMIRD.
12 That vote was the best decision for the rural area and the future of Whatcom County. A LAMIRD is best
13 for the Columbia Valley regardless of the countywide population projections. We urge the County
14 Council to confirm that vote. The planning tools are there for the Columbia Valley LAMIRDS that will
15 serve the resident's needs. We challenge you to use those tools and to do what is best for the County.
16

17 Dennis Jones, Whatcom County: I came tonight without information regarding alternative A. Of the
18 alternatives I did see I saw a no action alternative, which of course is not an option by GMA. I also saw
19 two other options, one of which they called alternative X, which looked at possibly some pullback and in
20 other areas some expansion of the UGAs. The other option was alternative Y, which I also see as a
21 non-starter. I know the County planners did a lot of work on it but I do see some increased density and
22 with that you provide some open space, so you don't overly increase your level of service on the
23 existing roads in Bellingham. It's not an option at the current time. I support alternative X at this time
24 and not necessarily the lowest possible projection. The only thing worse than failing to plan is planning
25 to fail with a number that's unrealistic.
26

27 Bob Wiesen, Whatcom County: The worst thing we could do would be to plan for an unrealistically low
28 population number. We experimented with this strategy with our roads many years ago and we are
29 paying for it at a very high price. Citizens lose time getting where they need to go. There is a higher
30 costs of doing projects like the Guide Meridian and the Pole and Hannegan Road improvement. There
31 is a higher cost of goods and services due to the increased transit times. My worry is that we are trying
32 to do too many complex things in too short a time. Worse yet, it's hard for citizens to keep up with the
33 process because of the short time between staff releasing important information and public hearings.
34 This makes our public process of low quality.
35

36 Patrick Alesse, Whatcom County: My mother had advice about growth which was crossing your legs
37 does not work. You really have to figure out how you can accommodate growth. It doesn't mean you
38 have to grow that much. In the years 2000 through 2009 I looked at the total property taxes for the
39 cities. They went up by 35 percent. Their growth of people went up 74 percent. The non-city areas
40 taxes went up 39 percent. The rural area growth was 26 percent. What this means is it isn't the cities
41 that are running out of money, it's the rural County that is running out of money and out of a tax base.
42 In a Smart Growth publication I received someone was talking about carbon footprint, stating if you
43 want to help the environment move to the city. Birch Bay, in the years 2000 to 2007, the population
44 grew 42 percent. That was more, in terms of percentage of growth, than Lynden, at 22 percent. Birch
45 Bay is a place people want to come to. It's a fool's paradise. It has a lot of natural capacity and I think
46 we need to keep growing there. I think there should be some light industrial along Kickerville Road.
47

48 John Coleman, Whatcom County: I want to commend County staff for working under such a tight time
49 frame that has been given to them by the GMHB. I am, however, concerned about the lack of
50 population review that has happened up to this point. During the workshops we were presented with a
51 number that was already picked. It was the mid-range number. My concern is that when these types of

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1 actions make their way to either the (Loopa?????) or the GMHB the process is more what's looked at
2 rather than the decision. It's stated that the jurisdiction has the purview to do pretty much what they like,
3 regardless of what people say and what the facts are. However, if you don't follow the process you'll
4 never get beneficial judgment. I don't have a problem with the population projections. I want to
5 encourage that the EIS actually looks at the full range so the County isn't in a position where they have
6 to defend their decision in the future, again.

7
8 Rollin Harper, Sehome Planning, Whatcom County: I am here this evening as the City Planner for
9 Everson, Nooksack and Sumas. Given the tight time constraints that we are facing we are coming at
10 this in an unusual way with the SEPA process proceeding before the cities have had the opportunity to
11 bring forward their proposals. The concern for the cities is that we are covered on the low end, at least
12 with the existing Comprehensive Plan numbers in the no action alternative. The concern is with having
13 picked some numbers that are below the OFM baseline we may not include enough room for the cities
14 to go through their process and come up with what the proposals are. We aren't talking about proposals
15 for sprawl. We are talking about what the cities see as the most reasonable continuation of what, in
16 fact, has been growth, in measured levels, in my cities, at urban levels of density. As I looked at
17 alternatives X and Y, which were based on a number below OFM baseline, then adjusted to see
18 possibly shifting more population to the small cities, I believe those numbers cover the highest numbers
19 out of X and Y. I would ask you to exhibit some restraint if you start to crunch numbers lower and
20 recognize there are a number of reasons why we want to bracket high enough for the cities to have a
21 chance to do their work.

22
23 Michael Lilliquist, Whatcom County: I want to say that the staff I have talked to in the Planning
24 Department have been friendly and respectful. I think there is a small, but serious, misrepresentation
25 when David Stalheim says that 50 percent of the people say that the number they picked is too little or
26 just about right. What he has done is taken that middle number, the about right number, and he's
27 lumped it with the too little number. You can just as well lump it with the too much number and say that
28 70 percent of the people think that the projection was too much or too high. It's a bogus statistic and I
29 think 50 percent is also bogus. I am not in favor of Alternative X or Y, but maybe A. Most people favor
30 Bellingham remaining as the job and population center. That may not be the best way to grow. I would
31 like to see the small cities become their own economic centers if possible. Staff has talked about how
32 we need to protect our rural lands, they say we need to have strong preservation, that we've had too
33 much growth in the unincorporated areas. Then there is a slight of hand in that they are saying we need
34 a higher or medium population number, as if you have to have one in order to do the other. We haven't
35 done right by our rural lands. We have allowed too much growth but we don't have to accept the high
36 population numbers to do the right thing. They are separate issues. I would like you to pick a rational
37 number. I think you first need to put to rest an erroneous belief that the past is destiny and the past
38 trends are the only rational numbers to accept. Imagine that you are a school board and I am going to
39 come before you and talk about school test scores. I am going to tell you that school test scores are low
40 and it's a fact and it would be foolish and unrealistic to plan for improved test scores. We need to plan
41 for a current rate of students success and student failure. We need to set good goals that we can be
42 proud of. We have to have goals that match our values.

43
44 John McLaughlin, Whatcom County: I would like to remind you that the population projections were
45 generated by an invalid model. We should not be planning our future or developing an EIS based on
46 statistical errors. The projections ignored any limits of any factors or resources. To address those limits
47 I would like to quote SEPA. "The review of alternatives in the EIS must discuss the benefits and
48 disadvantages of reviewing or observing for some future time the implementation of the proposal as
49 compared to possible approval at this time. The agency's perspective should be that each generation,
50 is in effect, a trustee of the environment for succeeding generations. Particular attention should be
51 given to the possibility of proposing future options implemented by the proposal." One can interpret that

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1 language as a strong argument for including the lowest projections possible as an alternative in the
2 EIS. Facilitating more development, choosing a higher projection is surely foreclosing on future options.
3 Destroying natural infrastructure or driving salmon to extinction is not acting as a trustee to the
4 environment for succeeding generation. There is a large and growing scientific literature on impacts of
5 land use on stream structure, riparian function and salmon populations, including quite a bit of work
6 done in western Washington. Several general conclusions emerged from this literature. First, when the
7 extent of urban development exceeds a threshold, impacts the streams and becomes so great that
8 salmon and other sensitive species can not persist. The development threshold for salmon depends on
9 several factors, but it appears it's difficult to retain salmon after about 10 percent of watershed becomes
10 covered with impervious surfaces, in some cases the threshold is only 5 percent. Second, the impacts
11 of urban development on streams and salmon have occurred even in the presence of riparian buffers
12 and other protective measures. Buffers do have value but they can't buffer streams from impacts,
13 particularly hydrologic impacts caused by urban development. Third, these impacts have occurred even
14 with aggressive efforts to mitigate development impacts, including best management practices. The EIS
15 scope should consider whether development should be on a level that will cause extinction of wild
16 salmon runs in streams and rivers. Identifying which runs will be lost will require an analysis of
17 impervious surface development and impervious surface coverage by watershed under development in
18 all areas. In some cases we may have exceeded the threshold, already. Any credible EIS must include
19 that analysis and it must consider foreclosed options.

20
21 Betty Shaw, Whatcom County: I live on King Mountain and I'm not happy about what happened there. It
22 will have terrific ramifications. The thing that worried me most about King Mountain was that it was
23 done under the table and illegally, not by you, but by somebody who is no longer here. King Mountain
24 was expanded into the City of Bellingham without annexation. Once that was established then that
25 particular guy was home free to build more homes. That's not right, not fair, not good. The first thing I
26 want you to think about carefully is critical areas. Think about slopes, trees, rivers and all of the things
27 that developers need to think about when they are building. King Mountain is solid rock. I don't know
28 how they are going to get all those houses there. The only impact I see is that it's going to impact the
29 quality of my life. How are you going to provide services in some of these areas? We had a meeting on
30 King Mountain and there was someone there from every City entity. The fire department, police, etc.
31 Every one of them said they could not provide services. It's too expensive and they don't have the
32 people. The traffic is horrible now. James Street Road is a small rural road that is falling apart. It's the
33 major access road. You are going to have to build new roads or make sure the ones you have are
34 going to stand up to the traffic because ours don't. When you cut down trees you ruin some of the air
35 quality. The reason so many of us moved to the county is because of a sense of community. I know you
36 don't want to destroy that. Be careful, because when you alter the City as much as this is being altered
37 and we continue to do it you have to do it carefully or we will all have to move to Everett and I don't
38 want to do that.

39
40 Brian Jones, Whatcom County: I have lived through three recessions so I am familiar with them. The
41 population continued to grow through them. I haven't noticed anyone has stopped having babies. I don't
42 think people are moving to California. I would like to suggest that we use the mid-range OFM and look
43 at the high and low figures too. Regarding land supply a lot of people have expressed surprise that we
44 suddenly have so much land available in the UGAs. If you change the density in the UGA higher than
45 our analysis and you increase the density in the cities, higher than our last analysis suddenly we are
46 going to have a lot more available land in the UGA. The question is do you want to live in a little rat
47 house in a 400 foot tower in downtown Bellingham? That way we could handle all of our population
48 growth. I am kind of shocked that I haven't heard a word, this evening, about affordable housing. This is
49 where it starts. If this is not a component of the EIS it had better be. There has been a huge process,
50 through the CHAT program to evaluate that. I need to know where my daughter is going to live next
51 year. I need to know where my son-in-law, who is in Iraq fighting for this country, is going to put his

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1 family. I need to know where my foster daughter is going to live with her baby. This place isn't cheap
2 and there isn't any place that's much cheaper. I favor the alternative focusing on Bellingham as the
3 growth area for this region.
4

5 Blair Murray, Whatcom County: I was not going to address the issues of LAMIRDs tonight, but I feel
6 compelled to do so because about half of the testimony tonight has touched on LAMIRDs in one way or
7 another. The scoping process is certainly intended to insure that the EIS focuses on relevant issues.
8 Columbia Valley is a community of urban development with a population of about 4,000 people. We all
9 recognize that it's underserved, both in terms of public facilities and commercial services. I think the
10 issue before us in regard to whether the Columbia Valley should be a UGA or a LAMIRD is how to
11 provide the necessary public infrastructure and commercial services that this community is pleading for.
12 Even those that are opposed to the retention of the UGA agree the services need to be provided and to
13 do this in a framework without allowing or permitting excessive growth. The LAMIRD, unfortunately,
14 does not achieve these objectives. LAMIRDs may not be used to create new small towns or new
15 commercial development where none had existed previously. A LAMIRD, within the Columbia Valley,
16 would be a residential type 1 LAMIRD, because there is not, and was not, as of July 1990, any
17 commercial development in that area. Some would have you believe that a type 3 LAMIRD is the
18 answer to the issue on commercial services for the community. Type 3 LAMIRDs are specifically
19 designed for cottage industries and isolated, small scale businesses. It's not a grocery store or the
20 other services that the residents of the Columbia Valley need and desire. A Columbia Valley LAMIRD
21 essentially means no necessary services. LAMIRDs have been interpreted very strictly by the GMHB
22 and by the courts. New development is restricted in terms of size, scale, intensity and use. It's these
23 uses that have been historically present. The retention of the UGA status is proper, just and right in
24 Columbia Valley and provides for the necessary public services and for the commercial opportunities.
25 GMA does allow and provides the tools to prevent excessive growth.
26

27 Rob Staveland, Whatcom County: There was one statement that caught my ear. In the course of a lot
28 of conversation about which population alternatives to use, as if choosing a population alternative was
29 to set a policy, but the EIS scope does not set the policy, it informs the policy. Therefore, it's important
30 to have useful information that must at least analyze the impacts of over planning as well as under
31 planning. There was conversation about the cost of growth and if that's the case we should analyze the
32 difference between the cost of growth in rural areas versus the cost of growth in urban areas. I believe
33 what we will find is that if we over plan, in UGAs, and the growth doesn't occur there will be little if any
34 harm done, but if we under plan and the growth occurs then we could have significant adverse impacts.
35

36 Amy Harksell, City of Lynden Planning Director, Whatcom County: You need to create a reasonable
37 range of alternatives to allow each of us, as the smaller jurisdictions, to plan appropriately for our
38 jurisdictions and you need to give us the respect and authority to do that. Rollin Harper made the
39 comment that you need to have a broad enough range so that we can look at all of those numbers. The
40 numbers that are here tonight are certainly within the range that I would expect my community to grow
41 with. We have all made an effort, over the last 20 years, to increase our density and meet the
42 requirements of the GMA. As a planner for the City of Lynden, for 17 years, I appreciate the fact that
43 the Council did agree to ask for an extension. Planning for our community does take time. We need that
44 luxury of time in order to formulate what is best for our community and to provide you with the best
45 information to make your decisions on. You need to look at the economic impacts of low growth. How
46 are you going to pay to change policies of the past as well as that upper bracket of how are we going to
47 put services out if we expand the growth.

48 Perry Eskridge, Government Affairs Director for the Whatcom County Association of Realtors,
49 Whatcom County: The one thing that keeps coming to my mind as I look at all of this information is that
50 Mark Twain said there are three kinds of lies. There's lies, damn lies and statistics. I took about 15
51 phone calls today concerning this issue. One of them was actually a realtor. All the rest were members

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1 of the public trying to get information about what is going on. I think that's a little disconcerting for me. I
2 think you are going to see a lot more public interest in this. I think people honestly believe that their
3 government is not giving them the full picture. They are looking to professional organizations to give
4 them the information. That should be of concern to you. It's concerning to me. I started really diving into
5 the numbers today and just want to give you something to think about. A lot of my realtors specialize in
6 rural lands. They have people come in and say that they want to live in a rural area. A lot of my realtors
7 are concerned that if we don't have rural land we aren't going to have anything to sell. When I started
8 looking at the Kendall area and the Columbia Valley numbers let's presume they are correct. Taking the
9 number that has been given to us, the medium number, of 3,000 people in the next 20 or 30 years. The
10 average occupancy rate is 3.1 people per unit right now. How many houses is that in that area? You
11 are talking about a thousand more homes. If you are looking at 5 or 10 acre parcels what does that
12 mean? It makes no sense. Let's presume these are going to be low income houses and there will be
13 second homes out there. All of a sudden you get lower occupancy numbers. If you only have two
14 people in a house and you are trying to provide for 3,000 more people what does that do? If you are
15 going to aim at a target don't put the top of the cross hairs at the area where you think you want the
16 bullet to hit. Move it, get a bracket and line things up in the middle.

17

The hearing was closed to the public.

18

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

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Minutes prepared by B. Boxx.

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WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ATTEST:

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Jean Melious, Chair

David Stalheim, Secretary

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