

From: PDS_Planning_Commission
To: Planning Commission
Date: 7/29/2010 10:08 AM
Subject: Fwd: county inability to meet LOS standards for government buildings

>>> "Jack Petree" <tradewrld@comcast.net> 7/29/2010 9:02 AM >>>
Commissioners,

The following was sent to Matt Aamot in response to his request for input on the County's inability to meet LOS requirements for County facilities. As you can see from the response, the whole request is pretty ironic given the capital facilities hammering the cities and others were subjected to last year, and threatened with in coming years in the just adopted Comp. Plan.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Jack Petree

Mr. Aamot,

The first feeling on reading about Whatcom County's inability to meet its Level of Service (LOS) requirements for public facilities is bemusement.

That is the case because the Whatcom County Planning Commission is currently struggling with LOS requirements for fire protection and, to some extent, for emergency medical response in the County's planning areas.

The bemusement comes because some Commissioners have suggested LOS levels should recognize regional differences throughout the County and, that LOS levels should reflect existing conditions in an area. The reasoning is the County failed to establish LOS levels in 1997 when it was supposed to establish them so local fire districts have, in response to the needs of the public they serve, established levels of service on their own; levels of service recognized as providing appropriate coverage throughout the county.

Suggestions that existing levels of service be adopted as appropriate in the various areas of the County have been met with disdain by some despite the demonstrated effectiveness of the de facto levels of service in place for the past 13 years.

It should be noted, a methodology looking at existing, and satisfactory, levels of services forms the basis of one of the approaches the State of

Washington's then Department of Community Development offered as an appropriate methodology for designing urban growth areas in the halcyon days of Growth Management.

The term "bemusement" is also appropriate because, as you may remember, last year most of Whatcom County's cities were bluntly threatened with the capital facilities club as part of the purported ten year review of the County's 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The owners of thousands of acres of UGA were stripped of the consistency guaranteed them as a foundation premise of the GMA and upheld as appropriate by Hearings Board rulings largely on the basis of that capital facilities club.

The blunt threat of future removal of yet more UGA from many of the County's cities due to inability to meet capital facilities demands on the part of the County is integrated into the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Former Director Stalheim pointed to those threats in his exhaustingly complete letter to the Whatcom County Council as it deliberated regarding the restoration of lands to some UGAs recently.

So now, even as the Whatcom County Planning Commission struggles with Level Of Service (LOS) issues the County boldly goes where it has been unwilling to allow any city to go before and simply says, "We can't meet our obligations so we'll just reduce them or, maybe even get rid of them all together."

I cannot say it much matters which option is decided on to solve the County's problem with one exception: Some methodology for assessing future need must be generated at some stage to help the county assess future need as part of a rational land supply analysis. I would ask you keep that in mind as you proceed.

Other than that, I hope the County offers its cities and other jurisdictions the same level of flexibility in providing for capital facilities levels of service in the various unincorporated UGAs of the County that the County appears to be willing to grant itself.

Regards,

Jack Petree