

**Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary, October 18, 2006**

Committee members in attendance:

Richard Banel

Phil Cloward, Vice-Chair

Bill Coleman

Jan Eskola

Gary Gehling

Amy Mower

Norma Otto

Lou Piostrowski

Cindy Purdy

Alan Seid

Sean Wilson

1) Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order by Gary Gehling and a determination of a quorum was made.

2) Public Comment – First Period

- Matt informed the Committee that the Russian translation of the questionnaire did not use the final version. It is being re-translated and will be re-launched on November 1st. They will have two weeks to respond. The same person will translate, but there two other people will review and comment on the translation.
- Matt announced that the Foothills Subarea policy workshop will be on November 16th from 6-8:30pm at the Kendall Elementary School.
- Sean said that he has been in contact with Tim Yeoman, the Mt Baker School District Assistant Superintendent, about whether the Russian questionnaires can be distributed throughout the school system to go directly to the parents. Sean will know shortly.

3) Meeting Summary

The October 4th meeting summary was accepted by consensus.

4) Non-agenda Issues

- Lou asked if there was to be a regular December 20th meeting. It was decided to discuss this later in the meeting.
- Jan announced she will be absent at the next meeting.
- Alan said that he has spoken with Sue Blake and turned it over to Matt for scheduling.
- Matt said that Sue can't come before December 6th; however, Bill Grimes is coming to that meeting.
- Amy referred to an email she sent to Committee Members and staff about the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area (UGA). She is interested in information such as soil permeability and aquifer recharge from the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE). Matt responded that the County Department of Health can address the soils issue (point 2A) from Amy's memo. They are already scheduled to speak to the Committee. Phil mentioned that the whole planning area should be discussed, not just the UGA. Matt said he sent Amy's request to Roland Middleton. A Birch Bay study is being done (\$100,000) on incorporation issues. Presently, only an overview of aquifer, etc. issues is available. Matt suggests making a formal recommendation. He also cautioned that they need to fit everything into the schedule.

5) Emergency Management – Don Boyd

Don started his presentation by pointing out that Whatcom County Sheriff Bill Elfo is director of Whatcom County Incident Management (WCEM) and that he is an elected official. He said he would discuss man-made and natural hazards.

Natural hazards include:

- Impacts associated with an eruption of Mt Baker including flooding, debris flows, and impacts on the Nooksack River system. Access routes will be affected.
- Floods. Historically, the Nooksack River flowed to Canada.
- Winter Storms and associated impacts such as lack of access to hospitals, power outages, flooding, road closures.

Man-made hazards include:

- Technological hazards. There is limited gasoline tanker traffic on Highway 542 and the potential impact would be a truck rollover.
- Methamphetamine labs. Don referred to the Disaster Preparation Handbook published by the Washington State Department of Health that he distributed, and discussed telltale signs.

Don encouraged people to prepare for emergencies of up to 5-7 days. He said that a pandemic flu would require a much longer preparedness time. He encouraged people with emergencies to call the WCEM.

Bill asked how the National Emergency Management System (NIMS) interfaced with the County. Don responded that the County is fortunate to use this system. It puts one person in charge with branch leaders. The County has submitted an annual report on how it is doing with training, which will allow the County to qualify for continuing funds. The County is at the 90% level for training.

Jan asked if applicants were not eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding without training. Don replied that is the case and that the County is well trained. Jan said the information that the Water District is receiving is that they are not well enough prepared. Don told her to have the Water District call the WCEM office.

Gary asked about signs posted for evacuation. Don said that only tsunami signs have been posted on the coast. Signs have not been published for volcanic hazards because evacuation routes may vary depending on the route of the hazard. Don said that Emergency Management can dial 6,000 phones per minute. They would rather go this route for emergency notification. TV and radio is second tier for notification and Sheriff/Deputies with loud speakers are third tier.

Lou asked about emergency shelter in the Foothills. Don said that WCEM doesn't pre-designate shelters. They rely on the American Red Cross to determine shelter sites.

Richard asked where WCEM is located. Don said the basement of the courthouse, but they are moving to the Laurel fire station on January 1st, 2007.

Lou asked if their service extends to Glacier and if they will get any information though the WCEM setup. Don responded that hopefully, information flows 2 ways. He said that they are currently pre-positioning sand and sandbags in anticipation of the flood season, that there is

a deputy who splits his time between the Glacier area and Baker Lake, that they are working on a US Forest Service deputy, and he encouraged citizens to call WCEM.

Matt asked for any recommendations to the land use chapter of the subarea plan with respect to volcanic hazard planning. Don replied that it was a tough question. He gave as an example the residences at low-lying Sandy and Gooseberry Points. He said it's a personal choice; people live where they want and have to accept certain hazards. WCEM can only talk about the hazards of an area, not the pro and con of living in an area.

Alan pointed out that this puts more of a burden on WCEM with increasing development.

6) Revised 2006 Population Estimates

Matt handed out a preliminary rough draft of population estimates with two options. One uses the Assessor data base only for a count of residences and applies an average household size multiplier and a recreational/seasonal/vacancy rate to arrive at a population figure. The other mixes Assessor data for residences and actual counts obtained by Jan for the Glacier area and Amy for the Maple Falls area. Recreational/seasonal/vacancy information comes from the 2000 census unless provided by Jan.

Norma will report back to the Committee at the next meeting on the number of full-time hook-ups for Water District 19. Phil will supply Water District 13 information. Amy asked about well information at the Health Department. Matt will contact them.

Jan stressed that the housing units in the developments such as Mt Baker Rim do exist and are being rented year round and as such should be counted. The number of permanent residences in these seasonal developments is also increasing. Gary mentioned there are some permanent residents in The Glen.

After much discussion, it was decided to form a subcommittee to address the Columbia Valley population issue. Phil, Richard and Sean volunteered to be on the subcommittee. They will report back at the next meeting.

7) Columbia Valley/Kendall UGA Workshop

Matt said one of the issues raised at the workshop was commercial zoning. There is a current policy that states that the Kendall Small Town Commercial area must be fully developed before other commercial areas can be considered in the Columbia Valley. Matt asked the Committee Members to examine the policy. He will be putting it on the agenda for the next meeting. He said this will help Bill Grimes as he formulates the subarea plan.

Lou asked for definition of built out. Matt responded that there isn't one, but that the Hearing Examiner and County Council considering a request for a site specific rezone would make a judgment call.

Alan said he assumed that when considering keeping, changing or deleting this policy there are lots of gray areas; lots of possibilities with a conditional use permit.

Amy asked about aquifer drawdown and recharge capacity. Matt responded that Roland Middleton said that we could have a general discussion, but it would take a study to provide more detailed information. Gary said it is difficult to tell where the aquifer goes. Norma said very little work has been done in the Columbia Valley because of the cost. She said the aquifer is thought to have tremendous capacity.

Alan pointed out that an overview of the water situation is the point, so that the Committee can make recommendations.

Sean ended the discussion by saying he thought the workshop was productive.

8) Preliminary Draft Land Supply Analysis

Matt posted the revised map of the Columbia Valley UGA, which now shows every house no matter the assessed value. Based on previous Committee discussions, Matt proposed that the assumption be made that non-urban zones in the UGA will be developed at existing zoning densities for the purpose of the land supply analysis, until Bill Grimes completes the land demand analysis. The Committee will revisit the issue of supply if estimated demand can't be met. The Committee agreed to this approach.

Matt then brought up the issue of residential use in commercial zoning, asking if it should be assumed there will or will not be residential use in commercial zoning. Amy said that part of the character of the Foothills is because of blended uses. Jan said that that not all growth will be in the Columbia Valley UGA. Lou said that Deming, Glacier and Kendall need to be looked at. The Committee once again decided to wait till estimated land demand figures are available before considering the issue of residential use in commercial zones. For now, it will be assumed that no residential use would occur in commercial zones for purposes of the land supply study.

9) 2007 Overview

Matt said that the November 27th date to review the preliminary subarea plan is not realistic. Bill Grimes will attend the December 6th meeting. He will bring estimated population projections for 2017 and 2027, the tabulated results of the questionnaire, and three land use alternatives – status quo and two other. He will use this information to create a draft subarea plan, which will be available at the end of December. Bill will attend the first meeting in January to present the plan.

Amy asked what will be discussed at the November 16th policy meeting. Matt said the results of the questionnaire and proposed policies, although the Russian language results would not be available.

The decision about the December 20th meeting was put off until the next meeting.

10) Public Comment – Second Period

- Larry Duncan asked Phil about the vacant lots with regard to the population estimate handout. Jan responded that the work by Norma and the subcommittee will answer his question. He also had a comment on the statement from a prior meeting that a city was already underway in the Columbia Valley UGA. Larry disagrees and said a huge tax base would be necessary to support a city.
- Mike Head asked if the Mosquito Lake Road area was excluded from the population estimate. Gary responded no, it was part of the “rest of subarea” category. Mike also said he appreciates the Committees diligence and urges them not to give up.
- Holly Koon asked what the preliminary subarea plan was going to be based on. Matt responded that information from all the workshops and questionnaires will provide the basis. Alan pointed out that the draft date was pushed back to incorporate the questionnaires.

- Rob Staveland had a question as to whether the Assessor records show recreational units. The records show all taxable property. He suggested the electrical company might be able to provide information for the population estimates. He mentioned that Aiki Homes had a ground water study done as part of their development application. He said there is a sheet of water about 60 feet down that moves at a good clip. Rob stated that the County divided the growth between urban and county. The County Council wants 90% of the County growth to be in the UGAs. And finally he said that the inability to rezone in Glacier could possibly be done through a master plan process if desirable.
- Norm Otto quoted a saying from the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce – what happens in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas. He said the same thing applies to the Foothills. Norm said he wants growth and full services in the Columbia Valley. He said each community should plan for its own growth. He felt that some of the Committee Members have lost sight of their objective, which is to plan for growth, not stop it. Sean said he appreciated what Norm has to say and that he is making an effort to hear all voices in Columbia Valley.

The next meeting will be November 1st, 2006 at the Kendall Elementary School from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Submitted by:
Sharon Digby