

Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Summary, October 4, 2006

Committee members in attendance:

Richard Banel

Phil Cloward, Vice-Chair

Bill Coleman

Jan Eskola

Amy Mower

Norma Otto

Cindy Purdy

Alan Seid

Sean Wilson

1) Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order by Phil Cloward and a determination of a quorum was made.

2) Meeting Summary

The September 6th summary was approved by consensus with the following changes:

- Page 2, bullet 2, last sentence – He said for new... should read Russ Pfeifer-Hoyt, School Board member, said for new ...
- Page 2, Item 7, first bullet – add new sentence: Cindy thought the “forced pairs” exercise would have been more useful on Friday, when more people were attending and at the beginning of the two day workshop, to engage the larger community and to get broader input.
- Page 3, Public Comment section – add sentence: Karen requested that if a speaker had to leave before the last public comment period, that the public be allowed to ask questions after the speaker’s presentation.

3) Public Comment – First Period

Matt asked if the committee wanted to amend their business rules to reflect a new procedure of allowing the public to ask questions of a speaker who has to leave before the next public comment period. The committee decided not to amend the business rules and that the public will be allowed a comment/question period after a presentation if the speaker intends to leave early, at the discretion of the Chairperson.

4) Non-agenda Issues

- Sean reported that Rick Gantman is working on the information that was requested of him at the last meeting but that it is not yet ready.
- Alan has been in touch with Sue Blake, Senior Planner for Whatcom County Public Works, Stormwater Division. He tentatively set a date of November 15th for her to speak to the Committee. Matt said that may be the day that Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development and Roland Middleton may be speaking. Alan and Matt will work out the schedule later.

Alan asked if the Committee members had any specific questions for Sue. Amy asked her to address current and anticipated water quality issues if the Foothills area experiences major growth. Sean asked that she make recommendations for mitigation. Phil asked that she address potable and stream water quality. Matt suggested sources of contamination, which Cindy amended to be current and future sources. Phil asked about geologic problems from Mt Baker, such as glacial silt in stream water. Alan will contact Lou and Gary about questions they may have for Sue.

5) Questionnaire distribution

The County mailed out 4,751 questionnaires to the Foothills property owners. Matt said that about one-third of the owners have addresses in Canada. It is posted in English and Russian on the website. Sharon will email it tomorrow. Matt handed out 500 English and 250 Russian versions for the Committee members to distribute. He requested that members email him a list the questionnaire locations. It will take Studio Cascade 2-3 weeks to compile the data. Matt shared with the Committee that he thought they made a good improvement to the original edition of the questionnaire.

6) Poster Distribution/Columbia Valley /Kendall UGA Workshop

Matt handed out the posters for the October 14th Columbia Valley/Urban Growth Area (UGA) workshop for Committee members to distribute. He solicited input from the members for Bill Grimes.

- Phil mentioned that Aiki Homes had researched the history of the UGA origination. He said it was available to the Committee
- Amy requested Matt to review the Aiki document before it went to Bill Grimes, but later retraced the request.
- Jan mentioned that if Studio Cascade was going to do something similar to the forced pairs exercise, that it be put on the agenda earlier rather than later.
- Matt referred to the contract with Studio Cascade and said there are several issues including: 1. density, 2. sufficient land for 20-year population, and 3. open space/green space.

7) Preliminary Draft Land Supply

Matt said there are two components to the buildable lands analysis: 1. How much developable land is available (land supply analysis) and 2. A land demand analysis. The County will supply the developable land information using a methodology designed and used by the County and Cities. Studio Cascade is responsible for the land demand analysis. The land supply requires first categorizing the land, which has been done, and agreeing on some assumptions to be used in the calculation. Matt asked for the Committee's input on the assumptions. The need is to plan for growth for 20 years or to the year 2027.

To accommodate growth, should potential land availability in the UGA be calculated assuming the areas zoned Rural 5 Acres (R5A) and Rural Forestry (RF) will be Urban Residential-4 units per acre (UR4)? Should it be assumed that the 80 acres to north in the Long Term Planning, currently zoned RF will be Light Impact Industrial (LII)? If the assumption is that there will be no rezoning in the UGA in the 20-year planning period, where will the growth be accommodated?

- Cindy asked if the growth for the UGA is set as part of the determination of where growth will take place for the whole County. Matt said that the population growth projections for the Rural designation is for the whole County, but population growth figures for the UGAs are set individually.
- Phil questioned having RF zoning in a UGA. He pointed out that the harvest of the 80 acres north of Limestone road was permitted as a conversion, not forestry continuation. It will not be replanted.
- Allen stated that he was not clear on how the current population question is to be resolved. He feels he is missing some information.
- Matt said there are two sides to the equation: 1. What's available and 2. What's going to be the demand.

- Alan asked if the population information supplied by Professor John McLaughlin was going to be used.
- Matt replied no. Hal Hart thought about using a third party to review the information from McLaughlin and ECONorthwest, but funding wasn't available. Matt gave a short history of the Short Term (ST) versus the Long Term (LT) Planning Areas. The Growth Management Act (GMA) Hearings Board determined that Whatcom County had too much land in UGA designation. The County resolved this issue by creating ST and LT Planning Areas.
- Richard asked if there are current population figures.
- Matt said yes, from ECONorthwest. The Columbia Valley/Kendall UGA population is estimated to be 3,232. Matt reiterated that 20-year growth needs to be planned for. If land is not available and demand can't be accommodated, growth will have to be planned for elsewhere. Matt emphasized that by assuming zoning changes, doesn't mean it will happen.
- Alan asked for a wider view, where are we going with this information.
- Matt responded that it is necessary to figure the number of dwelling units that can be accommodated.
- Alan asked how this information is used.
- Matt said it will be provided to Studio Cascade for demand analysis.
- Jan said that vacant lots in the UR4 should be built before considering where to put additional future demand. Phil agreed and said he would like to know how many vacant lots exist.
- Jan presented a question to the Committee: Do we want the Subarea Plan to drive this area to become a city?
- Phil responded that becoming a city is already underway.
- Cindy disagreed with Phil.
- Sean said it would be counter productive to ignore what exists.
- Richard asked if there was a provision in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan that all vacant lots must be built before rezoning?
- Matt responded no.
- The Committee will discuss the land supply issue at the next meeting.

8) Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Presentation – Ellen Barton

Ellen started her presentation by asking the Committee Members if they would like her to discuss general bicycle/pedestrian issues or answer specific questions. Richard suggested she give the general overview.

Ellen is the Chair of BPAC which was established in 2001. Their mission is to provide input to the County Executive on facilities and programs that will result in the increased safety and use of bicycle and pedestrian travel as a significant and beneficial mode of transportation and recreation. Their objective is the creation of a system of designated bikeways and walkways and their connections with off-street trails, including prioritizing these new bikeway and walkway facilities; standards for the construction and delineation of such bikeway and walkway facilities; development of information programs to promote safe usage of such facilities.

Ellen pointed out that the interests of walkers and bicyclists are not central to Whatcom County Public Works. She talked about trails versus sidewalks versus shoulders. The BPAC

has had to wrestle with attention to safety for those who don't drive. She said that Public Works thought the shoulder was a solution for children.

BPAC has created a prioritized list of options addressing off-road trails and shoulder/share road issues.

Ellen pointed out that solutions to bicycle/pedestrian issues takes community involvement and that these kinds of programs are very cheap and a good use of tax payer dollars. She requested input from the Committee members. There are three Foothills projects in the top 20 of the prioritized list, that are currently being worked on in the proposed update of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan:

- #4 Kendall/Sumas Road separated multi-use trail. Allan pointed out that some ownerships have changed since the last BPAC meeting and property that wasn't available before may now be so. Richard asked about school policy walking distance. Ellen said it is a mile, but there are mitigating circumstances that can result in children being bussed within the one mile limit. She also mentioned that the health ramifications from lack of physical activity to children are enormous, that Type 2 diabetes is on the rise. Only 20% of the population gets physical exercise.
- #14 Bay to Baker Trail - Maple Falls to Glacier. Matt asked if any of the trail is open. Ellen responded that some of the trail is and that the Mt Baker Club has been working the remaining parts. Matt asked if there is a finish date. Ellen said no and there is a delay due to certification of ownership on a right of way.
- #14a Cornell Creek Bridge. The Whatcom County Parks Department is working on an easement for a better location.

9) Public Comment – Second Period

- Ellen Baker said that the Bay to Baker trail goes behind her house. She asked how BPAC proposed to deal with privacy issues. Ellen responded that they will work with individual property owners with fences and plantings. She said that the Whatcom County Parks Department would be responsible and property owners would need to talk with them.
- Karen Reich asked if there was anything in the plan addressing a pathway along Mt Baker Highway. Ellen responded that those areas where a multiple modal trail can be placed along the highway are part of the plan. She pointed out the State is responsible, but relies on local comprehensive plans. A trail along the highway would require fairly active local input. BPAC meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at Planning and Development Services from 5:30 to 7:00pm. Currently the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan is before the County Council for approval. The prioritized list of projects is in the BPAC April minutes, which are on the web.
- Jan asked if BPAC has looked at a trail connecting the residences east of Glacier to Glacier. Ellen responded that that is a piece of the Chain of Trails project, which recognizes the need to go as far as the Douglas Fir Campground. A path has been identified, but needs more work.

10) Revised ECONorthwest Population Estimates

Matt asked the Committee to think about how much residential use should be allowed in commercial zones. He said that Birch Bay assumed one-half of the resort commercial designated land would have residences.

Matt discussed the preliminary draft population figures ECONorthwest provided of 6,421 for the Foothills area in 2006. The County GIS found 2,845 dwelling units in the Foothills area. ECONorthwest used the vacancy rates found in the 2000 U. S. Census to arrive at their figure.

- Amy asked for what is this information going to be used.
- Matt responded it is the baseline data.
- Amy stated that all residences should be used, not just those in the Small Town Commercial area
- Matt thought the vacancy rate may be high for Glacier. Phil agreed.
- Matt asked Jan to come up with vacancy figures for Glacier, to which Jan responded she would do.
- Alan asked if changes to the Glacier area could be extrapolated to other areas. Matt responded no.
- Cindy and Jan thought that the developments east of Glacier should be included in Glacier statistics.
- Matt said he will talk to Bill Grimes about adding the developments east of Glacier, but it is not in his contract.
- Amy said she will work on Maple Falls population estimates.

Additional Public Comment Period

- Larry Duncan commented that the Maple Falls population estimates look too small and a subdivision behind Maple Falls should be considered in the Maple Falls estimate.
- Ellen Baker asked if there was an intermediary zoning between R5A and UR4. Matt said no, the Growth Hearings Board ruled against that. An exception is Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development where they can infill at a density similar to historical growth.
- Karen Reich asked if the Committee was limited to the figures obtained after making assumptions about growth or if they could plan for more growth than projected.
- Matt responded that he hasn't researched Growth Hearings Board determinations on this issue.
- Rob Staveland 1. Made a clarification: the Future-wise decision says rezone to UR4 or remove the designation, 2. He pointed out that Water District 13 and 19 have more than 1700 full time hook ups. At an average of 2.91 people per household, that is close to 5,000 people in the Columbia Valley alone, and 3. The long term supply/demand study contracted by Aiki Homes is part of the public record and the Committee is welcome to use it. The study was done by Northern Economic. He said it is fairly extensive. The County required the study.

The next meeting will be October 18th, 2006 at the Kendall Elementary School from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Submitted by:
Sharon Digby