

**Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary, January 3, 2007**

Committee members in attendance:

Richard Banel	Norma Otto
Phil Cloward, Vice-Chair	Lou Piostrowski
Jan Eskola	Cindy Purdy
Gary Gehling, Chair	Sean Wilson
Bill Coleman	Alan Seid

1) Determination of Quorum

Gary Gehling called the meeting to order; a determination of a quorum was made.

2) Public Comment – First Period

Gary Gehling read a letter from Joan Airoidi, Director of Whatcom County Library System. Joan wanted to make it a matter of record that the Library system and Mt Baker School System are currently in negotiations to acquire a parcel of land next to the fire station in the Kendall STC for the purpose of building a new library.

3) Meeting Summary

The December 20th meeting summary was accepted by consensus.

4) State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development – Dick Larman

Mr. Larman gave a presentation on funding infrastructure and rural economic development. He applauded the public process currently underway in the foothills. He identified four components which he called “*Forces of value*” used to create viable economic growth strategies:

- **Economic Value:** Land/Housing prices (affected by land use policy and market trends)
- **Political Value:** Zoning needs to represent and support planning goals and desired economic activities
- **Social Value:** What type of industry, manufacturing or commercial
- **Physical Value:** What is good for the community and the environment

Mr. Larmen touched on the importance of planning in gaining a public financial investment and stressed the importance of balancing the “Forces of Value” in the community to best ensure a viable economic strategy that meets the needs of the community it will serve. Areas that public financing can be available for include; utilities, roads, sewer, bridges or other publicly owned projects and infrastructure. Loans are in million dollar increments and additional fifty thousand dollar planning grants are also available.

Application cycles are annually with the current cycle just past. Mr. Larmen also outlined several other financial options for infrastructure loans that can be accessed through the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. Potential funding sources

include the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB), Community Block Grants, Public Works Trust Fund, Transportation Improvement Board, and the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation.

5) Non-agenda items

Matt noted that the library would not be available at Kendall school from Feb 21st through April 4th – Cynthia suggested that we could use her classroom. Bill also said he would look into availability of facilities at the casino.

6) Population Projections and Land Use Alternatives Discussion

Kendall/Columbia Valley UGA

Matt reviewed the population projections submitted by ECO Northwest and also reviewed the land supply analysis contemplating the number of housing units required to accommodate the projected population for the planning period at length with the committee. Matt observed that the goal should be to provide for adequate land supply to accommodate projected growth without creating an overage that could lend itself to encouraging sprawl if the UGA was found to be larger than necessary to accommodate projected population.

Matt then reviewed the land use alternatives with the committee and presented detailed explanations for each alternative, noting the differences between re-zoning and creating a policy overlay. Matt noted that with a recommendation to re-zone, the county would be the applicant versus a private developer. The policy overlay concept would support a re-zone upon application from a private developer, and require a review period and mitigation of any foreseeable impacts associated with a proposed project.

Lou invited Kevin Zender to speak to the committee regarding proposed development of land in the UGA at the base of Red Mountain behind the Peaceful Valley and Paradise communities.

- Mr. Zender and his associates have an application pending at County Planning regarding a 20 acre parcel. He stressed the importance of utilizing the additional land not currently contemplated in the pending application to prevent dumping and other undesirable usages occurring due to its remote location. Mr. Zender noted that there is a letter from the DNR stating that the land will not support timber and that it is difficult to restrict trespassing due to the open nature of the property. The committee thanked Mr. Zender for his presentation.

Gary solicited additional public input prior to formal deliberation of the land use alternatives.

- Rob Staveland suggested that the committee consider re-zoning the rural 10 acre parcel(s) to rural 5 acre. Rob also noted that a policy overlay is preferable to a re-zone in his way of thinking because it requires any developer proposal to submit to a review process prior to approval of the application which ensures the community will have input in any project that might be proposed for the area. Rob also suggested a provisional light industrial policy rather than the light industrial zoning.
- Karen Reich asked whether an “uneven boundary” for the Small Town Commercial (STC) zone could be established to include the proposed library land if the STC were removed from the UGA. Matt responded that it might not be defensible if challenged

in court. It was noted that libraries and schools are conditional use permits in the rural zone and permitted outright in the STC and that neither alternative would prevent the library from being built in the desired location.

Gary suggested the group review the key elements from each alternative one at a time in an effort to reach consensus on a single conceptual alternative. Gary solicited input from the UGA committee members to begin the discussion:

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

- Sean stated that he supported the idea of a provisional light impact industrial policy overlay, noting the benefit of flexibility and having an appropriate review and community input mechanism built in to scrutinize any project that might be proposed under such an application.
- Lou noted that the proposed policy overlay could have the potential to encourage outside interests to locate additional infrastructure such as a gas pipeline etc. to accommodate a light industrial project.
- Phil suggested that there may be some benefit to considering underutilized land east of the UGA. Sean noted that the policy should allow for consideration of projects “in or bordering on” the UGA to ensure a reasonable level of flexibility that will encourage appropriate locations that will not conflict with current land uses.
- Cindy stated that she is struggling with the idea of endorsing a town in the UGA, noting concerns about law enforcement, traffic and maintaining rural character.
- Lou noted that by creating jobs locally, there is a potential to reduce the amount of traffic on the highway.
- Alan noted that the UGA is an area designated for growth and that he supports the values expressed by Cindy and the importance of retaining rural character.
- Richard stated that he also recognizes the importance of retaining rural character and appreciates the values expressed by Cindy. Richard noted that the citizens he has queried in the UGA during this planning process have strongly supported the idea of local jobs and a commercial area centrally located in the Columbia Valley.
- Gary noted the importance of recognizing that residents outside of the UGA have concerns about the potential impacts of growth in the UGA and stated that the committee should plan on addressing any potential impacts as we move forward into the policy sections of the sub-area plan.
- Gary solicited and gained consensus and a commitment from the group to address any potential impacts that might be brought to the table regarding the impacts of the light industrial policy overlay when the committee addresses the policy sections of the comprehensive plan.

- Lou suggested that a subcommittee be appointed to draft the proposed language for the light industrial policy overlay. The sub-committee will be Richard, Lou and Sean.

COMMERCIAL / TOWN CENTER

- Norma noted her support for the general commercial overlay contemplated in alternative one.
- Richard noted that a policy overlay has the potential to limit commercial development
- Cindy wanted clarification on the difference between the two alternatives and the boundary for the proposed commercial designation.
- Matt noted that a Town Center Comprehensive Plan overlay designation with an associated policy in the subarea plan would support and encourage a re-zone to general commercial upon application by a private interest versus a re-zone which would allow a developer to apply for a building permit without undergoing any public review process.
- County Council Chair, Laurie Caskey -Schrieber stated that a policy overlay has a great deal of power to promote the desired result without the need for outright zoning modifications, noting her experience with recent issues in Birch Bay. Laurie noted that a policy overlay has the benefit of additional conditioning and review.
- Cindy wanted to ensure that the commercial policy overlay would be limited to the area represented on the map. Matt confirmed that it was limited, although it could be smaller.
- Alan noted that the proposed commercial policy overlay would require that the committee strike the policy (2 AA -13) requiring build-out of the STC. Alan also noted the strong support from the residents of the Columbia Valley for a commercial center located in the proposed area.
- Bill stated that he supported the alternative one commercial policy overlay and that he felt it was protective and consistent with good stewardship and responsible planning for future growth.
- Jan stated that the group would not be able to reach consensus and that she would prefer to withhold her input until the vote.
- Gary noted that there would be an opportunity for a minority report.
- Gary made a motion to adopt the general commercial /Town center designation and policy overlay as presented in alternative one and to strike policy 2 AA -13.
- Gary confirmed that all members of the committee were clear on the motion prior to voting on the recommendation.
- The committee voted 8 FOR - 1 OPPOSED - 1 ABSTAINED. Gary noted that the minorities are entitled to an "issue specific" minority report that will be included with the committee's final recommendations.

Public Comment – Second Period

- Kevin Zender suggested the committee consider a cottage industry designation for the parcels currently zoned rural 10 acre.
- A community member asked what plan is in place to deal with traffic issues that could potentially arise from commercial development in the STC. Gary noted that many of the traffic concerns exist currently without any additional development and that those concerns need to be addressed.
- Larry Duncan suggested that funds available from the State Department of Economic Trade and Development might be available for infrastructure upgrades and discourages removing the STC from the UGA. He noted concerns about potential stakeholders who may be vested under the current zoning.
- Richard stated that he believed an application had to be pending to be vested. Gary noted that removing the STC from the UGA would not necessarily affect current zoning.
- Hal Hart, Director of County Planning noted that policies can be developed and funded through many resources if the community has a vision and a stated plan.
- Karen Reich thanked Cindy for her comments and concerns regarding future growth in the foothills. She wanted to note Gary's comment about ensuring that issues coming out of the UGA were addressed and that the community has input in decisions regarding those potential impacts. Karen Also stated that she had spoken to members of the community who were opposed to the proposed development in the UGA, addressing the committee business representative, Richard Banel.
- Richard Banel asked what neighborhoods in the valley she had obtained the input from. Karen stated she had conversations at the library and restaurants, etc. Karen acknowledged that she had not solicited the information door to door in the same manner as Richard had.
- Another community member stated she was new to the area and that she was concerned about residential development in the UGA noting significant lack of commercial land and services to support the population. She noted that there was opposition to additional residential development because of the lack of services and infrastructure currently available.
- Carolyn Ferrer noted that she appreciated the work that the committee has done and supports the idea of planning for growth and managing the influx of people. She feels the Balfour development would be a positive step toward managing growth as opposed to allowing sprawl in the foothills.
- Rob Staveland, in response to Mr. Duncan's suggestion to bring water and sewer to the STC noted that it may fall outside of Water District 13 service area and that there could be significant challenges to achieving that sort of approach. Rob noted that this had been proposed in the past and defeated due to the extensive cost of such a project.

The next meeting will be January 17th, 2007 at the Kendall Elementary School from 5:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Submitted by:
Sean Wilson