

**Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary, September 20, 2006**

Committee members in attendance:

Richard Banel

Phil Cloward, Vice-Chair

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) Public Comment – First Period**

- Rob Staveland announced that Kevin Hoult of the Small Business Development Center at WWU has been hired to work specifically with the Foothills, Everson, Point Roberts and the Tribes. All services are free and confidential. Rob recommended that the committee have Kevin speak at a meeting. Alan asked how he would fit in. Rob responded that the organization promotes economic and business opportunities. Phil said that Kevin could provide professional advice on cottage industries.
- Matt said that Studio Cascade is working on the questionnaire but it is not printed yet. The policy workshop has been delayed to mid-November, in order to process the information gathered from the questionnaire. The Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area workshop will be held on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

**3) Meeting Summary**

The September 6<sup>th</sup> summary was approved by consensus.

**4) Mt Baker School District – Rick Gantman**

Rick discussed the declining enrollment at the school district between the 2003-2004 and the 2006-2007 school years. He said they don't have the resources to research the reasons for the decline. A major source of the school district funding is tied to enrollment. He pointed out some of the expenses that the district has that urban schools don't have such as a water system and septic system. The Kendall school was designed for when the funding occurred. It took three years to build, and consequently, the school opened at capacity. The school continues to stay at enrollments above what it was designed for and portable classrooms have been added. In response to a question by Matt about capacity, Rick responded that there is not an open class in the entire district. He pointed out the losing 2 children from each classroom in the district still would not free up classrooms.

Richard asked about where the noted decline comes from. The largest portion comes from the high school where students participate, mostly part time, in the Running Start program at Whatcom Community College. Even though the students are gone for the part of the day, the need for classrooms doesn't decline. They have also lost students at Acme and Kendall schools.

Key issues are:

- Maintaining excellent school improvement effort, improvement of student performance. Rick pointed out that on one of many indicators, the WASL test, Mt Baker students performed right up at the top in the County and State.

- Financial challenges, declining enrollment. Rick said that it is hard to avoid drastic financial decreases. He said even though expenses such as fuel costs for busses and heating have greatly increased, the district does not receive more money.
- If growth occurs: 1. Keep small school climate, 2. Additional facilities. Rick pointed out that research shows that small schools are more effective schools. Russ Pfeifer-Hoyt, School Board member, said for new school facilities, the district would like to see flexibility – less restrictions and more options – in the Subarea Plan.
- Lack of youth activities and services in the Foothills area, limited athletic facilities.
- Limited job and career training opportunities for students
- Unsafe walking/biking routes. Rick talked about the need for a trail in the Columbia Valley for students to get to the Kendall School.

Rick also mentioned school bus routes and need for road improvements for “school bus friendliness”. They would like to see safety language in the subarea plan about the 542/547 intersection, the road in front of Kendall school and the right turn west of the intersection. Sean requested that the district supply the committee with a list of safety/bus route issues.

Alan pointed out that Roland Middleton from Planning and Development Services is responsible for implementation of subarea plans. At a past meeting Roland requested that 1. Foothills Subarea Plan recommendations be very specific and 2. that the subarea citizens send recommendations to the County Council for more in-depth studies. Alan suggested as an example, a study on why students are leaving the school district.

#### **5) Non-agenda Issues**

- Alan recommended having the chair of the Whatcom County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee speak to the committee. Phil suggested expanding to trails also. Alan will follow up on getting speakers. Matt asked Alan to coordinate scheduling with him.
- Amy asked about emergency management. Matt responded that that is scheduled for October.
- Amy asked about a State sewer and water presentation. Matt said he got the contact name today and will pursue this.

#### **6) Questionnaire distribution**

The committee decided on two options. The preferred option is to mail to the approximately 5,000 property owners and print 500 extra to be placed in commercial and public locations. The second option if mailing is too expensive, is to place the questionnaire in the Foothills Gazette (about 3,500) and print an additional 500-1000 for distribution. The questionnaire has to be to the Gazette office by the first Tuesday in October.

#### **7) Kendall Small Town Design Workshop Review**

Matt asked for the participating committee member’s opinion of the workshop.

- Cindy was disappointed in the Saturday turn out (21) versus the Friday evening turnout (54). She thought Saturday was too long. 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.
- Jan felt uncomfortable discussing the Kendall area on Saturday with so few Kendall participants.
- Phil pointed out that there were no business owners present. Phil thought the consultant should have been better briefed. He said that some commented that the Friday meeting

was disoriented. Phil thought that discussing the Kendall Small Town Commercial was putting the cart before the horse, when the Urban Growth Area boundaries haven't been addressed.

- Matt said that the notice was mailed to all property owners in the Small Town Commercial zone and to property owner within one-quarter mile. He state that the number one priority that came out of the workshop was highway safety, number two was a community gathering place.
- Sean said he heard a lot about safety on Friday night.
- Amy said it would have been helpful to have a notice as to when the Department of Transportation was going to speak.
- Richard pointed out the Friday's presentation was conceptual and Saturday was hands-on, dealing with the issues.
- Alan said he enjoyed the process.
- Sean pointed out the ownership needs to be promoted through a sense of community. Saturday's lower attendance may be a reflection of lack of community ownership.
- Phil and Alan talked about the generalized idea of Kendall boundaries, old Kendall, south of the S curves and new Kendall. Old Kendall is not included.

### **Preliminary Draft of Buildable Land Analysis – Matt**

Matt handed out land information obtained using the County GIS system for existing land use categories. He said that in the past the County and the Cities have worked out a methodology for determining buildable lands. He said it was used for the Birch Bay Subarea update. Bellingham is in the process of refining the methodology for the needs of the urban environment. Matt pointed out that the projections for population and future land needs is the responsibility of Studio Cascade.

The first step is to categorize the land. Matt presented assumptions that have to be made when assessing buildable lands. Critical areas, land for roads and road right-of-way, market factors have to be subtracted from the whole to get a net buildable lands determination. Matt said that he wanted to engage the committee in the assumptions and will discuss this at the next meeting.

Phil requested copies of the maps for each committee member.

### **Public Comment – Second Period**

- Karen Reich said she knew of a Russian translator for the questionnaire. She asked if Whatcom County charges school impact fees. No. Developers can enter into a voluntary agreement. Karen pointed out that there may be more than one person per household that would like to fill out the questionnaire and suggested adding information on the questionnaire directing people to the website and public locations to obtain another copy. Karen requested that a speaker had to leave before the last public comment period, that the public be allowed to ask questions after the speakers presentation.
- Kai Jansen suggested institutions using email addresses for sending information. For instance, the Assessor could collect email addresses.

The next meeting will be October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at the Kendall Elementary School from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Submitted by:  
Sharon Digby