

MEETING SUMMARY

PDR Oversight Committee

March 26, 2010, 8:30 AM

Planning and Development Services – Northwest Annex Office

Voting members present: Allison Aurand, John Gillies, Paul Schissler, Mark Harting, Barbara Dykes, John Steensma; Others: Craig MacConnell (WSU); County PDS Staff: Samya Lutz, Dean Martin

1. Public Comments/Announcements/Agenda Review: Paul announced an upcoming Livability Forum at 5:30 pm on April 1, at which a film “Making Sense of Place” will be shown with a panel discussion afterward – location is 1320 Cornwall Ave, Bellingham.

Committee members welcomed John Steensma who was officially appointed to join the committee at the Council meeting March 16.

2. Review of Minutes: The February 26, 2010 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved (Motion: Mark, Barbara).

3. PDR Applications

The Bannerman PDR application - Those present discussed the draft ranking and property characteristics of this farm. There were a number of concerns, including: the isolation from other farming enterprises, small acreage, intensive surrounding development, feeling that this property could function as open space for the rural homes rather than a viable farm, lack of farm infrastructure included in the application, and the retention of the development right in the application.

Barbara made a motion (Mark second) for staff to draft a letter to the Bannermans articulating the committee’s concerns. Other members cautioned against giving any impression of future funding, even if concerns were addressed; the committee would need to re-review the application. **All in favor.**

4. PDR Program Discussion – Subcommittee

The group discussed the subcommittee handout “Tasks and Next Step Options.” Mark lead the others through the outreach & education subsection, where the following questions arose: might we want city-connected groups involved too (Sustainable Connections, Farmers Market, Public Market, Food Coop, etc.); is it more applications we are wanting, or more political support. Craig noted there has been a past history of competition for funding between parks and farmland, and Parks has made a strong case for support. A brochure may help, but the issues are much more complex than that. Paul noted that the economic and fiscal arguments for supporting farm preservation have been underdeveloped in the past, and the idea was to look at this connection. John suggested we look at some specific examples, comparing the costs of infrastructure to support rural development

(roads, school bussing, police, etc.), with the cost of the PDR transactions. Barbara suggested the committee change the title of 1.A. in order to make it clearer the intent is for more applicants.

The discussion then turned to 1.C. John said he is interested in seeing the draft questionnaire developed by Ann. Samya will send this out to the group. John mentioned a survey about the future of Lynden may also be helpful and relevant – if so, he will send it out. **Barbara made a motion to extend the contract for Ann’s time to be spent on farmer interviews. John seconded.** Generally, committee members were in support of Ann continuing the outreach, completing interviews, and putting together a brief report, but wanted to see the questions first. Some felt committee members could assist with the interviews. Craig clarified that information about the PDR process and ideas for improvement is different than using information to market the program – we need to be specific about what we want. **Motion tabled to give committee a chance to review questions. All in favor.**

Samya will send the WAC reference from the handout to the email list at the request of Craig & others.

Samya asked that a couple committee members consider joining her and PDS management to speak with the Executive in early May about the PDR program. This would be followed within the month with a Council Planning & Development Committee meeting discussing the same subject matter. John and Mark agreed to participate. Another member may also join in. John suggested a few talking points: PDR program is optional; compare avg cost to support residential property with PDR costs looking 40 years out or so; program is not for everyone – show maps and highlight some properties (smallest, largest, most expensive, etc.).

The subcommittee will meet on April 2 to discuss how to proceed with the economic or fiscal data, and continue re-drafting the next steps ideas.

5. Other Discussion

Allison said the Skagit PDR group has offered an open invitation for us to attend their meetings, which are the second Tuesday of the month.

Dean mentioned the Planning Commission will hold a meeting on April 8 at 6:30 PM in Lynden at the Fire Hall to begin discussion of potential Agricultural Comprehensive Plan changes stemming from new state requirements.

Next committee meeting: The committee will meet again to conduct regular business on Friday, April 23, 8:30 AM, at the Smith & Northwest Planning & Development Services office.

Motion to adjourn – Passed.

Signed, Allison Aurand, Vice-Chair PDR Oversight Committee