

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 28, 2023 - Meeting Notes

Planning Commissioners Present: Lorie Spogen, District 1; Jason Alves, District 1; Gretchen Fritsch, District 3; Frank Corbin, District 3; Kathy Chastain, District 2; Corbin Foster, AL

Planning Commissioners Excused: Bob Russell, District 2

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Office Assistant Senior; Barbara Russell, Prosecuting Attorney; Lee Napier, Director of Community Development

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – March 14, 2023
- Staff Report: Packwood Subarea Plan

1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

2. Call to Order

A. Determination of a Quorum

6 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Chastain made the motion to approve the agenda; second by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from March 14, 2023. Commissioner Alves made a motion to approve the notes as presented; second by Commissioner Chastain. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

There were no members of the public who wished to provide comment.

6. Public Hearing – Packwood Subarea Plan (Continued Hearing)

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner, gave a presentation on the Packwood Subarea Plan items updated from the previous hearing date.

Short Term Rentals (STRs)

Chair Spogen asked for an example of an impact of the short term rentals. Mindy responded what the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) talked about was the need for evaluating the impacts of short term rentals on things like housing. Since Packwood is not its own jurisdiction, the implementation of short term rental policy would be best county wide. Chair Spogen also posed the question of how enforcement/regulation could be executed for STRs. Barbara Russell, Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney, responded that if STRs are classified as a business they will have to have their septic systems evaluated as such. Mindy added that other counties have approached similar situations with a capacity max. However, when considering policy language it is important to consider if it's likely that the policy can be implemented and enforced.

Commissioner Fritsch asked, the zoning designations that the CAC came up with do not currently exist in the county anywhere, right? Will those not apply countywide or implemented in other communities in Lewis County?

Mindy: The land use designations that we're proposing in the land use designation map do not exist in Lewis County at this time. These would be brand new, and therefore, in order to implement them, we have to write brand new development regulations. Those development regulations would only apply where those designations apply and at this time that would only be the Packwood Subarea Plan boundary area. But we could consider through a future planning effort in another community, if similar designations and development regulations would be appropriate. However, at this time Packwood is the only place we are looking at.

Fritsch: Are you are talking about how regulation would not be allowed to be Packwood specific regarding short term rentals, but the land use zoning and regulations can be Packwood specific. Is there any correlation between those two?

Mindy: Absolutely. This potential policy being considered say to ensure that newly built multifamily is preserved for long-term residency. In rural areas, if there is no sewer, you can't have multifamily housing. So a policy like this applies only where there is sewer. The way you can potentially implement this kind of policy is to, for example, take the downtown area of Packwood that is designated as Mixed Use, and say that there cannot

be any short term rentals in that space. This applies to Packwood because it is the only place with that zoning designation.

Mindy: There is no resolution with the Community Advisory Committee on this topic.

Historic Mill Property

Fritsch: Is there a reason why the residences are further away from downtown than the commercial is? Is the commercial zone contaminated and therefore not suitable for residences?

Mindy: I don't have specifics on contamination of the site, but you are correct in that it is easier to clean up to commercial standards than it is to residential standards. There was a lot of discussion about keeping the downtown area at the scale it currently is. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to develop large-scale apartment complexes or other larger residential units in the downtown area. The Mill site should have larger scale commercial and some larger scale apartment complexes would also be appropriate there. Larger apartment complexes at the Mill site would not take away from the character and scale of downtown.

Kim: If you look at the proposed map, the Commercial designation that exists on the left side of Highway 12 already exists as an industrial park. The connectivity between the proposed commercial area that is already there would make it one larger commercial area instead of having the commercial areas broken up by residential.

Alves: With some of the proposed changes, is this something that you guys have been in conversation with the property owners about? Has everyone been pretty agreeable trying to negotiate that out?

Mindy: We have shared the staff report with the Packwood email list, which includes the property owners. And I've reached out to make sure they are aware of the report. I want to make sure that I am protecting our advisory committee. The CAC needs to have this conversation based on what is appropriate land use for Packwood long term. This is in some ways like a quasi-judicial matter where the property owner could go and sell it the next day, so we don't want individuals trying to lobby for individual properties and push the committee towards something that is only in the owner's best interest. That said, it is important that all the property owners in Packwood are aware of what we are doing and have opportunities to engage in the process.

Alves: I agree that one person shouldn't sway the whole thing, but I am curious how cooperative the conversation has been.

Mindy: The Mill owners came in at an odd time because we were already formulating the plan when they purchased the property whereas other property owners had more time to participate. This particular site in 200 acres, which is a pivotal, massive space that

changes how development happens in Packwood. That means it is critically important for the Advisory Committee to try and get this right. This decision is more consequential than a smaller space. Everyone has been very cooperative and helpful.

Fritsch: What is the CAC's purview? They seem to have the power to draw lines wherever they wish or where it makes sense for the flow of the town.

Mindy: The BOCC is the decision maker. CAC is only providing advice to Planning Commission and BOCC. Zoning, the next step of land use designations, is the county's responsibility. As bad as it may sound, you do not need the property owner's permission to zone property. The CAC should consider land use designations based the public good and what is best for the community going forward, not individual owner interests.

Mindy: There is no resolution with the Community Advisory Committee on this topic.

Huntington Road Property

Staff summarized that the discussion is much larger than just the individual property. The discussion is about properties surrounding the Packwood Airport and what are appropriate future land uses and development. The CAC would like time to discuss all of the properties around the airport, including Huntington Road.

Commissioner Chastain made a motion to close the hearing on the Packwood Subarea Plan with no recommendation and remand the plan to the Community Advisory Committee for further discussion on the land use designation map, particularly the properties surrounding the airport, and short term rentals. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Corbin. The motion passed unanimously.

Mindy closed by saying that the CAC will meet 3-4 more times and then the updated Packwood Subarea Plan would come back to the Planning Commission for a new public hearing. That is likely to take place in August or September.

7. Workshop – Comprehensive Plan Population & Housing Allocations

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner, gave an update on the population and housing allocations for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. She explained that the cities have been experiencing significant growth since 2020 and are anticipated to continue to grow at a fast rate. Right now the population projections are coming in above the Office of Financial Management's high projections. Much of the growth is anticipated in Chehalis.

Corbin: Since Lewis County is increasing, that means that other jurisdictions are decreasing, correct? Can we get some of their population allocation?

Mindy: There is no competition between the counties in terms of allocation, but you are right that some of the population coming to our county is decreasing the population of

the jurisdiction they left. The allocations that OFM comes up with should account for population movement and well as in and out migration.

Alves: Are we substantially over the high population from OFM?

Mindy: It is substantially over – about 11,000 people over.

Spogen: Chehalis is looking at how much property they have at 24 units per acre, but there's no way they are going to build multifamily on every acre.

Mindy: They did a 50% takeout. They did a land capacity analysis and then took away half the capacity.

Spogen: That means they have to triple their fire, water, school, etc. So do they have the option to say no?

Mindy: They can absolutely say no if they cannot serve it. If a jurisdiction literally cannot provide sewer to a development because the waste water treatment plant has no capacity, they are going to say no. Infrastructure and capacity is often what slows growth.

Spogen: Are we actually producing what the state is mandating?

Mindy: We did the analysis looking at how the cities expect to grow, rather than what the state is saying about local growth. The population estimates are cities stating how they anticipate to grow. Chehalis wants to be able to adequately plan in their capital facilities plan so they can apply for the loans and the grants to expand infrastructure to support the growth.

Corbin: If we go with the OFM high number, in five years we will go through this process again and we will have the opportunity to make adjustments.

Mindy: Yes, I have mentioned that as well to all the cities. We do this allocation every five years.

Chastain: If every five years this projection is done, have people looked back to see how accurate their projections were? If they are just targeting higher numbers so they can get more money that's not what the goal should be, right?

Mindy: The goal is to make sure that you calculate your population accurately so that you can plan your capital facilities and UGA accurately. If you undercount then you are not planning your capital facilities for how much you think you are going to grow. All the analysis that I did to produce the first round of 20-year projections for everyone was based entirely on past growth trends. The trouble is that our growth is ramping up. I fully support that all of our jurisdictions are growing faster the OFM projects.

8. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy: We did not receive any requests for rezones or UGA expansions this year. The docket has been updated to remove the holds for considering rezones. We also pushed the RV/campground code update out one month to do a bit more public engagement. *The docket is available online [here](#).*

The county is updating our policy on providing food for meetings like this. If we were able to provide sandwiches or tacos or something similar for every Tuesday meeting, would you want that? The Commissioners agreed that a variety of light refreshments and healthy snacks would be appreciated, but sandwiches or similar meals is not needed.

B. Planning Commissioners

There were no items from the Planning Commissioners for the good of the order.

9. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on April 11, 2023 and the agenda item is a workshop on the Rural Housing Update and Population/Housing Allocations.

10. Adjourn

Commissioner Corbin made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.