

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

April 25, 2023 - Meeting Notes

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

Planning Commissioner Excused: Kathy Chastain, District 2;

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Office Assistant Senior;

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – April 11, 2023
- Staff Report: Population and Housing Allocations
- Staff Presentation: Population and Housing Allocations

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 Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; second by Commissioner Corbin. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from April 11, 2023. Commissioner Corbin made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Workshop – Comprehensive Plan Population & Housing Allocations

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner for Lewis County, gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan Population & Housing Allocations (*see presentation for details*). The following discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commission Spogen asked staff what the Planning Commission is actually voting for or against when they vote on this topic. Mindy responded that the Planning Commission is voting to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the 20-year population allocation and the 20-year housing allocation. If the Planning Commission were to vote no, they would need to provide a logical alternative for the allocations. The cities have put forth effort and communicated with each other through the Planned Growth Committee meetings. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Planning Commission should need to vote against the proposed numbers unless something big was overlooked. Spogen clarified that if the Planning Commission votes yes, to adopt the numbers, they will be reassessed after five years. Mindy confirmed that the numbers will be reassessed every five years.

Commissioner Spogen asked about Chehalis' estimated population allocation, how they got to their numbers, and whether that is what the City is asking for or if the state is mandating them to meet those numbers. Mindy explained that Chehalis' methodology is in the attachment to the staff report and is based on a land capacity analysis using 24 units per acre (minus area for infrastructure). They are asking for half of what the land can accommodate, according to their analysis. The numbers that Chehalis is asking for is what the city wants. Mindy also clarified that OFM doesn't do estimates for each city, only a total estimated population range for the county as a whole. It's the county's responsibility to divvy it up.

Commissioner Spogen shared that although the city of Chehalis has demonstrated they have land to build out housing for increase population, she doesn't agree that all the units will be required because of people moving into the area. Mindy shared that there has been a significant increase in people and developers wanting to come to this area because Lewis County may be expensive, but far less expensive than the south sound area. Chehalis has been turning away development because of lack of infrastructure. The population allocation is part of capital facilities planning to ensure there is enough infrastructure to accommodate future growth. Commissioner Corbin added that broadband is also coming in, making Lewis County an area that more people can work from.

Commissioner Russell expressed his agreement with the fact that most of the development is occurring in the cities and not in rural areas.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the housing percentages and allocations are based on the actual percentage of lower income people that are in a specific location. Fritsch pointed out that there is a need for lower income housing on the East end of the county, but they are not near the infrastructure to support it. Mindy responded that the Commerce models are not based on the location of low income need. The models are purely mathematic – which percentages of housing should go in each jurisdiction.

Commissioner Russell stated that he is looking forward to seeing action plans from Chehalis to meet the numbers proposed.

Commissioner Spogen asked if this is a new housing process or has it always been required. Mindy responded that this is a new requirement of House Bill 1220 that requires counties and cities to plan for housing at all income brackets. Commerce is required to provide guidance on how to do it. The model is very simplistic, which makes it easy to meet, but not realistic. That's why it's guidance.

Commissioner Spogen asked if the Planned Growth Committee does any planning on what they want the cities and county to look like, rather than just big developments full of apartments. Mindy responded that the PGC looks at countywide items such as population and housing allocations, countywide planning policies, and UGA expansion requests. The cities do their own comprehensive planning individually or in partnership with the neighboring jurisdictions – that doesn't happen through the Planned Growth Committee. Mindy shared that smaller jurisdictions do not have the staff/resources for extensive comprehensive planning, which puts them at a disadvantage. Spogen shared that the unintended consequence could be that the cities have massive multifamily housing with no livability.

The Planning Commission Hearing on Population and Housing Allocation will be on May 9th at 6:00pm. The BOCC Hearing on Population and Housing Allocations is tentatively set for June 13th at 10:00am.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy shared that Community Development will be moving to a new location next to the Historic Courthouse. In that building, we will have our own hearing room for hosting Planning Commission and other county meetings. Mindy shared some of the proposed details of the room. The tentative move in date is sometime in November.

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Russell, following up on the conversation from the last Planning Commission meeting, asked who initiates an Urban Growth Area (UGA) request.

Mindy: The way that it should be done is that the population allocations are adopted for each city, they do a two-year comprehensive planning process where they decide where the UGA should grow, and then they should make a proposal to the county. Where the UGA grows should be based on avoiding critical areas and growth in places where services like sewer can be expanded. The way that it is actually done is that a property owner approaches the city and asks to be in the UGA. Then the city looks to see if they need UGA expansion and then the city brings it to the county. It does not need to be the property owner that approaches the city. The county does not need a property owner's consent to expand the UGA.

Russell: I think it's fascinating that we can ask the city to expand the UGA to a particular area.

Corbin: Is there any sign that Chehalis will resubmit the UGA request that was denied last year?

Mindy: I have asked the cities to not submit requests to expand their UGAs this year. I would like them to wait for their population allocations so they can do good comprehensive planning over the next year or two. Winlock did ask for a UGA expansion this year so Planned Growth Committee will be reviewing that at the next meeting.

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on May 9, 2023 and the agenda item is a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan Population & Housing Allocations.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Corbin made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.