

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 27, 2023 - Meeting Notes

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

Planning Commissioners Excused: Corbin Foster, AL

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

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – June 13, 2023

1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

2. Call to Order

A. Determination of a Quorum

5 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum.

3. Approval of Agenda

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

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from June 13, 2023. Commissioner Chastain made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

Dana Jones provided public comments on the Short Term Rentals in Packwood.

John Hess provided public comments on the RV Parks and Campgrounds Code amendments. He also provided a handout to the Commissioners and the Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.

6. Workshop

A. Packwood Subarea Plan

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner for Community Development, gave a presentation on the Packwood Subarea Plan (*see presentation for details*). The following questions and discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Spogen asked if the Packwood Subarea Plan policies are being applied to new buildings only. Mindy responded that yes, policies will only apply to new development. Current short term rentals within the subarea boundary will be vested under the current regulations.

Commissioner Chastain asked how far out the county is looking for sewer expansion. Mindy responded that there is not a determination yet. The engineering is still in development and working through issues.

Commissioner Spogen asked if that the Residential High Density and Mixed-Use zoning areas mostly buildable. Mindy responded that the Mill Site is the largest buildable area. Then there are a number of lots in the downtown core that are undeveloped. When sewer comes in, that area could redevelop over time. Spogen asked if critical areas would prevent development in those areas. Mindy responded that critical areas would not affect most of the Mixed Use. The majority of critical areas are in the Residential Low-Density areas. There is also a portion of Open Use designated land that is Hall Creek, which goes across the Packwood Station property, that will not be developable.

Commissioner Corbin asked if staff are going to recruit the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for feedback going into Phase II of the Subarea Plan. Mindy responded that the current members of the CAC will be offered the opportunity to continue in Phase II, as well as opening up the committee to anyone else who wants to participate. There will be additional open houses, surveys, etc. to make sure we get varied input. Mindy also shared that she is available to any members of the public who want to meet with her to share information and she can then take back to the CAC.

Commissioner Spogen asked if the CAC had discussions about whether builders would take advantage of STRs and whether it would be profitable in terms of multi-family housing. Mindy responded that long term rentals are not as profitable as STRs. The CAC did not do a pro forma approach to this to figure out different sites. Once sewer is in, the sites will likely pencil out for redevelopment and multi-family will be the option. In the downtown core facing Highway 12, we already have a policy in the plan regarding ground floor commercial and second story multi-

family. There have been some developers interested in this type of development, but it cannot be done without sewer.

Commission Russell shared that he likes what he sees with the policies moving forward and that the CAC has answered questions about the Mill Site and Airport property.

Commissioner Spogen stated that earlier Mindy mentioned one of the goals was to prevent sprawl. Spogen asked if they had any discussion about whether enforcing STR regulations, specific to the subarea boundary, may create sprawl because it is pushing people out to other areas. Mindy responded that the way that sprawl is defined is by housing density, it's not the use type. Outside of spaces like LAMIRDs, there is 1 house on 5 acres with an ADU, and either could be short term rentals. The intention of containing sprawl is outlined by the land use plan, which focuses the density of development into that downtown core and the Mill Site. It tightens it up allowed density and uses, instead of letting things like commercial shoot out all over the place, which is what the small town mixed-use allows to do now. Regulating STRs in the subarea could have an impact on the market, but not on sprawl.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if people are just supposed accept that single-family residences are no longer considered an affordable option for a family. Mindy responded that Commissioner Fritsch is asking the Statewide/West Coast dilemma. How do we make single-family housing affordable again? This is a huge conundrum, and it's not an issue that Packwood can take on. We are trying to focus on the pieces that Packwood can accomplish. I believe everyone from the state, down to every level of government, wants to figure out how we can make sure people can live in single family residential as well as all other options. Commissioner Corbin added that it is important to define what affordable housing is. Someone from King County and someone from Lewis County will likely have very different definitions of affordable housing. Mindy responded that there is much more coming on housing countywide. There will be another update on the Rural Housing Alternatives as well as mandates for affordable housing in the Comprehensive Plan update.

Commissioner Fritsch stated that between the two new policies that are being proposed, she assumes there will be some regulations on STRs based on the balanced language. There is going to have to be some line drawn somewhere. Fritsch expressed her appreciation for staff and the CAC coming up with more guidance around STRs.

Commissioner Spogen asked who would purchase the property around the airport. Mindy responded that the county could purchase the property adjacent to the airport in order to prevent incompatible land uses and development.

Commissioner Corbin noted that in terms of Fire & EMS services, some fire districts have severe shortcomings. There are huge issues that needs resolving; the 911 system, empty fire halls with no volunteers to man, lack of funding to pay for staff, etc. In thinking about planning in Packwood, we need to make sure to do something about emergency services to keep up with the demand. If we are setting a policy to provide, then who are we committing to pay for it and

provide it? Mindy responded that this is a larger conversation, some of which will be had during the Comprehensive Plan update. The county is required, under the Growth Management Act, to demonstrate adequacy of service when development occurs. There's an adequate public facility form that gets filled out when a developer is proposing a larger development, such as subdivisions, commercial development, or industrial development. It is not required for smaller developments like single-family residences on an existing lot. Commissioner Fritsch asked if there is a threshold for how many residential permits can be issued before public services reach capacity. Mindy responded that there is not currently an adopted threshold in Lewis County. Right now, capacity is based on professional judgement.

Mindy concluded her presentation by presenting next steps. The next workshop on the Packwood Subarea Plan will be on August 8th and the public hearing is tentatively scheduled for September 12th at the Packwood Community Hall.

B. RV Parks and Campgrounds Code Amendments

Preston Pinkston, Planner for Community Development, gave a presentation on the RV Parks and Campgrounds Code Amendments (*see presentation for details*). The following questions and comments occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Spogen asked for clarification on whether RVs can stay in Mobile Home Parks. Preston responded that there are Mobile Home Parks in Lewis County that allow you to stay in your RV. Spogen asked if you can live in your RV on private property for less than 60 days. Preston responded that living in an RV on private property for less than 60 days would be considered camping and is allowed. If someone exceeded the 60-day limit, they would be required to obtain a Mobile Home Placement Permit. This would require a well and septic connection and inspection by the Building Department. Commissioner Corbin asked if there is a certain standard for the utility connections. Preston responded that staff from Environmental Health would be able to confirm, but he believes that the standards are the same as any other residence. Spogen asked if an RV can be placed on a property with an existing residence on it. Preston responded that if there was already a primary residence, the RV would be considered an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and they do not have to share the same septic or well as the residence. However, they can share wells and septic.

Commissioner Chastain asked if the cities have the same rules and regulations. Preston responded that cities have their own rules that they implement.

Commissioner Spogen asked for staff to explain what a park model is labeled as. Preston responded that it depends on how L&I licenses it. L&I decides what criteria it meets and defines whether it is an RV or Factory Assembled Home.

Commissioner Russell expressed that the diagram in the presentation is very helpful. In looking at the diagram for RVs on private property, can all three options - camping, short-term rental, and full time living – be in effect at the same time? Preston responded that all three are options,

but they cannot all three occur at the same time. You could have two RVs. One as a short-term rental and one as a residence, or two as residences.

Commissioner Spogen asked what problem is being solved by having a regulation that you can only rent out a spot on your property for less than 30 days. Preston responded that the State code says less than 30 days is considered transient accommodation. This is likely in place so that people wouldn't stay in hotels and motel and other transient accommodations for too long. Spogen asked what is being harmed by letting people stay there as long as they want. Preston responded that it comes down to regulating uses. If people want to live somewhere full time it should be permitted as a mobile home park and if people want to camp somewhere part time it should be permitted as an RV Park. Mindy added that this is because there needs to be a cutoff to identify the difference between recreational use and residential use because these have different life-safety and public health requirements (i.e., septic, well, etc.). Commissioner Alves reiterated that the point of updating the code at this time is to call things what they are, just like we are doing with Short Term Rentals in Packwood.

Commissioner Spogen asked if staff considered making a classification for RV Parks with stays under a week to encourage people from out of the area to have more available sites, rather than competing with people that are living in an RV park for 6 months. Preston responded that currently, the code has a distinction for 60 days and 180 days. However, the code does not regulate the two any differently, so staff removed the distinction.

Commissioner Spogen asked what the criteria is for moving from one space to another. Does the resident have to disconnect for a certain amount of time before the timeline starts over? Preston responded that Lewis County does not have regulations for that.

Commissioner Spogen asked if there are any restrictions on the caretaker accommodations, such as working at the site and not paying rent. Preston responded that there are no regulations like that. The regulations that are applicable to caretaker accommodations say that if a new caretaker accommodation is being proposed as part of the RV Park, then it counts towards the cabin/yurt density limit of 25% of the site. New accommodations can be up to 1,296 square feet. Existing houses used as caretaker accommodations do not have a maximum square foot requirement.

Commissioner Corbin asked what extending the 180 day limit to 210 days aimed to address. Preston responded that it was extended based on data that seasonal working periods are typically 7 months or less.

Commissioner Corbin expressed that he would like to see a humanitarian clause to allow for situations such as medical emergencies that may cause people to need to stay longer than the allotted time in an RV park. Preston responded that the county can't write code for the rare exceptions. Code needs to be written for normal use. In the case of a medical emergency or something similar, if Code Enforcement was involved, they would first give the person 30 days to come into compliance. If after 30 days, the situation is not resolved, they would go to court, in

which the judge would likely give the person more time to resolve the situation if they are actively trying to solve the problem. Preston remarked that in his experience working alongside Code Enforcement, if somebody is working to try and remedy the situation, they're going to have plenty of time. Commissioner Russell added that staff is writing policy, not enforcement.

Commissioner Russell asked staff to discuss the idea of allowing 2-acre RV Parks rather than 2.5-acre RV Parks, as brought up during Public Comment by John Hess. Preston explained that the county currently has 2.5 acres in the code because when the code was adopted in 2000, the Growth Management Act said that any lot less than 2.5 acres was not rural. This has shifted now to focus on retention of rural character rather than having hard limits on lot sizes. Lewis County has not changed the 2.5-acre lot sizes because most of the unincorporated area has densities of 1 house per 5 acres, except for LAMIRDs, and in preserving rural character, the county thought 2 acre lots may be too small. However, neighboring counties do have 2 acre lots. Spogen elaborated that through the clustering process, there are lots that are smaller than 2.5 acres. Preston clarified that lot sizes and density are sometimes used interchangeably but are actually different. Russell asked if someone could ask for a variance to have an RV Park on 2 acres. Preston replied that this code will not allow for variances. Spogen asked if there were a lot of property owners who are just under 2.5 acres that want to put in an RV Park. Preston responded that he does not know the answer to that question.

Commissioner Spogen asked staff to clarify how zoning plays into the permitting process for RV Parks. Preston responded that if someone wants to develop an RV Park, it does have to be in a zoning that allows for it. There were no zoning changes in this code amendment. RV Parks cannot be in Industrial Zones. Mindy displayed Title 17.42 Use table that shows what zoning RV Parks and Campgrounds can and cannot be in. Preston discussed the difference between having all RV Parks be required to obtain a special use permit versus the current Binding Site Plan process.

The Commissioners expressed that they are ready to move to Public Hearing. Staff let the commissioners know that the notice of hearing will be on July 6th and the hearing will be held on July 25th. The updated draft code will also be available on the webpage on July 6th.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy shared Community Development's subscription email announcement option, which have recently been updated, now allows people to sign up to receive emails about specific topics.

B. Planning Commissioners

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

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on July 25, 2023, and the agenda items are a public hearing on the RV Parks and Campgrounds Code Amendments and a workshop on the Rural Housing Alternative.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Russell made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.