

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 13, 2023 - Meeting Notes

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

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

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – May 23, 2023
- Staff Presentation: RV Parks and Campgrounds Code Amendment
- Map: Onalaska Subarea Plan

1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

2. Call to Order

A. Determination of a Quorum

7 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 Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from May 23, 2023. Commissioner Corbin made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

John Hess provided public comment in opposition to the proposed RV Parks & Campgrounds code.

6. Workshop

A. RV Parks and Campground Code Amendments

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

Who the Rules Apply to

Commissioner Russell asked if currently, and in the future, an individual could allow family to camp on their property. Preston responded yes; a property owner can allow family to camp on their property for free for up to 60 days. If someone is camping longer than 60 days, it becomes a residence. If they are charging a fee to camp on a property, it becomes a transient accommodation.

Commission Corbin asked if RVs are required to hook up to a septic system. Preston responded that as long as they are being used recreationally for less than 60 days, they do not need to be hooked up to sewer. However, they can hook up to septic if desired.

Definitions

Commissioner Russell asked what the driving factor was behind adding more definitions to the code. Preston responded that there are terms in the code that were not adequately defined, which can make interpretation and implementation of code difficult.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the definition of transient accommodations will apply to just the RV Parks and Campground code or to all of the Lewis County Code (LCC). Preston responded that it will affect all of the LCC. Fritsch followed up by asking if Short Term Rentals are considered transient accommodations. Mindy responded that Washington State considers STRs as transient accommodations, but STRs are still not addressed in LCC.

Commissioner Fritsch asked about cabins and recreational use and why there is a time limit. Preston responded that the use of the word cabin in this code is relating to recreation. A cabin that someone builds on their property as the primary dwelling unit is considered a single family residence, regardless of what it looks like. Mindy added, if somebody is living in a cabin full time, it's a single family home. If it's a secondary home, temporary home, or transient home, then it's considered a cabin, no matter the size or the look. There are a lot of people in Lewis County that have secondary homes that they call "cabins" and are not renting out.

Review Process

Commissioner Russell asked if applicants applying for a Special Use permit will still need to apply for the Master Site Review first, which identifies wetlands and critical areas. Preston responded yes; the code requires the applicant to first go through the Master Site Review process.

Commissioner Spogen asked how much it cost for a Special Use permit. Preston responded it cost \$3,200 for the Special Use permit, which is a similar price to the Binding Site Plan, but does not require a surveyor. To do a Special Use Permit or a Binding Site Plan, the applicant will also need to go through the SEPA process, which costs \$1,300.

Density

Commissioner Spogen asked why tent camping has a density limit. Preston responded there's a density cap due to public health and safety requirements. Also, there are setbacks around the perimeter of the site, so the park is not impacting the surrounding neighbors. Parks are all going to have facilities of some kind, open space, and other things that take away from the usable space of the campsites themselves. Each campsite needs to have adequate space around it so they're not against each other and allow space for fire safety and equipment. The current proposed density for a tent-only campground would allow 25 camping sites per acre and up to 3 tents per camping site for a total of 75 tents per acre.

Length of Stay

Commissioner Spogen asked about landlord eviction rights and how these codes would apply. Mindy responded that this is a completely different set of regulations that don't have to do with the RV Parks and Campground code.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the goal is to provide seasonal housing for 180 days, why limit the stay in cabins? Why not also make those available for seasonal rental? Does it have to do with the fact that they're being provided versus somebody pulling in their own RV? Preston responded that cabins and yurts fall under the state lodging definitions of transient accommodations. Cabins and yurts, even in the RV park, are still transient accommodations so they have to be limited to 30 days. Fritsch asked if yurts can only be used as transient accommodations. Preston responded that someone could build a yurt and stay in it as a single family residence as long as it meets the criteria for a dwelling unit.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the county has a chart or visual to explain what items trigger each type of development regulation. Preston responded that staff does not have that type of resource but is looking to provide more materials once the county has made determinations on RV occupancy and short term rentals.

The Commissioners shared some thoughts about the length of stay requirements and where the cutoff date should be, in addition to proposing the idea of a variance option for unforeseen circumstances. Commissioner Fritsch expressed concern that 180 days is not long enough for seasonal workers at Mount Rainier National Park or White Pass Ski Resort. Commissioner Corbin expressed concern about unexpected hardships that may result in someone not being able to leave at 180 days, such as a medical emergency. Commissioners Spogen agreed with Corbin's concerns. Together, the commissioners asked staff if there would be a way to allow for variances or exceptions in these types of situations. Mindy explained that in regard to the length of stay, people should be looking at permitting developments as mobile home parks rather than RV Parks if the intention is to allow people to stay for longer periods of time. If people want to occupy a location for more than 180 days, it is in the public's best interest to have septic and water hookups and to do some different things with the structures themselves. From an enforcement standpoint of public health, there needs to be a cut off between an RV park and a Mobile Home Park. The Commissioners and staff had further conversation about the difference between public health standards for an RV park and public health standards for a Mobile Home Park. Mindy said that additional information will be provided for the next workshop on the code amendments.

Commissioner Chastain asked who enforces the codes. Preston responded that Lewis County Code Enforcement responds to complaints about code violations.

Commissioner Spogen asked how someone can be removed from an RV Park if they were over the maximum number of days. Staff responded that it would start with the owner or operator of the RV park/campground and they could involve law enforcement. Lewis County code enforcement could be involved but they would be citing the owner/operator, not the person staying at the RV park/campground.

Staff closed by asking the commissioners to send questions prior to the next workshop on June 27th so that staff can prepare responses.

B. Onalaska Subarea Plan

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner for Community Development, gave an explanation of the Onalaska Subarea Plan.

I wanted to let you know that we've begun a subarea planning process for the community of Onalaska. Mindy displayed a map of Onalaska on the screen. The yellow line is the existing Urban Growth Area. The UGA was applied in 2017 through a subarea planning process. However, during that process, not all of the elements needed in a subarea plan were completed. This is creating conflicts between the zoning, which is STMU or STI, and the UGA. Basically, we can't have LAMIRD zones in a UGA – we will fix that.

As you know, a subarea plan is actually completed by the community. Staff facilitate the process, but the community are the ones who create a 20-year vision, goals and policies. We held a

community meeting on June 7, last week, to start letting people know about the process and to invite people to serve on the Community Advisory Committee. 57 people attended the meeting and 14 filled out a form indicating interest in the CAC. Ideally we will have roughly 20 people volunteer, so we are still actively recruiting. CAC meetings will start in September.

We will keep you posted on the process, as we have done for the Packwood Subarea Plan. Since we are working from an existing plan, we anticipate the process to go a bit faster for Phase 1, which is the vision, goals and policies. Then we will complete the implementation, which is the zoning map and development regulation. The goal will be to have the Packwood implementation and Onalaska implementation line up with adoption of the Comprehensive Plan periodic update. That means we will be done with both phases by June 30, 2025.

Commissioner Russell asked if a person has to live in Onalaska in order to be on the Community Advisory Committee. Mindy responded no you don't have to live in Onalaska. Anyone who is a stakeholder in the future of the community can be part of the advisory committee.

Commissioner Corbin praised Mindy for her work.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

There were no items from staff for the good of the order.

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 June 27, 2023, and the agenda items are a second workshop on the RV Park and Campground code update and a workshop on the Packwood Subarea Plan.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Russell made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.