

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

January 9, 2024 - Meeting Notes

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

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

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – December 12, 2023
- 2024 Docket
- Quarterly Report
- Community Development Strategic Vision
- 2023 Process Improvement Report

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 as presented. 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 December 12, 2023. Commissioner Russell made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Workshop

A. Elect Chair and Vice Chair

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long-Range Planner for Lewis County, facilitated the election of officers.

Commissioner Frank Corbin was nominated for Chair by Commissioner Spogen; seconded by Russell. Commissioner Corbin accepted the nomination. The Planning Commission voted 6-0 in favor. Commissioner Skutley abstained.

Commissioner Jason Alves was nominated for Vice Chair by Commissioner Corbin; seconded by Russell. Commissioner Alves accepted the nomination. The Planning Commission voted 6-0 in favor. Commissioner Skutley abstained.

B. 2024 Docket

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long-Range Planner for Lewis County, gave an overview of the 2024 docket (*see document for details*). Mindy noted that the purpose of the Docket for the Commissioners to know what to expect over the next year. This is important when there are quasi-judicial actions on the horizon, so Commissioners know to avoid hearing information about those projects outside of an open public meeting. However, there are currently no quasi-judicial actions on the 2024 docket. The docket can be updated at any time after adoption.

One of the first items on the docket is the Rural Housing Alternative (RHA). There will be a workshop on January 27 and then a public hearing on February 23. Staff will be providing an update on the RHA to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on January 16th at 1:00pm in the BOCC Hearing Room, the meeting is open to the public and in person only. The RHA concept came out of the Lewis County Strategic Plan that the BOCC put together, and housing was identified as a significant issue. A housing forum was then hosted in December 2021 and following, staff was directed by the BOCC to put together the Housing Initiative. The RHA is an item that came from the initiative as one tool to help encourage affordable housing options throughout the county. The BOCC has been updated throughout the process but has not received an update in many months as the Planning Commission has been working through the details.

Commissioner Russell asked if staff is giving an update to the BOCC on any other topics. Mindy responded that on the 16th the meeting is going to be only on the RHA. However, staff will

provide them with a copy of the 2024 docket. Commissioner Russell expressed concern about sharing information with the BOCC before the Planning Commissioners formed their opinion and recommendation. Mindy responded that because this project was initiated by the BOCC they have been updated throughout the process of the technical and procedural information, but they will not be given a recommendation until the Planning Commission has made that decision. Lee Napier, Director of Community Development, added that Eric Eisenberg is the lead on the RHA and he works directly for the BOCC. Since Eric is leaving the county in March, having an update with the BOCC will provide successional planning.

Commissioner Skutley asked when the public will be informed about the idea of the Rural Housing Alternative. Mindy responded that she and Eric did a round of public engagement early on to get people's initial opinion about the RHA. The public will get to formally respond when there is a Planning Commission public hearing and BOCC public hearing. Commissioner Corbin added that all the Planning Commission meetings are public so anyone who has an interest in the subject are welcome to attend the meetings. Mindy added that there is also a Planning Commission email list that anyone can sign up to receive notifications about upcoming meetings and the topics that will be covered.

Mindy noted that most of the 2024 docket is the Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff is working with the consultant right now so that the docket can be updated with specific items within the Comprehensive Plan.

There are holds for Urban Growth Area requests, but there have not been any requests yet. The cities have until April to make their requests, but staff does not anticipate the cities bringing forward any this year.

Commissioner Russell asked if there will be anything on the docket for the Packwood Subarea Plan. Mindy responded that on January 2nd the BOCC adopted the Packwood Subarea Plan, which means Phase I is complete. Phase II, implementation, will happen through the Comprehensive Plan Update. There will be updates about Packwood throughout the year.

Commissioner Russell made a motion to adopt the 2024 docket; seconded by Commissioner Spogen. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy provided an update on the YMCA rezone. On December 22nd, Thurston County Superior Court signed the final order, and it was a directive for the Board of County Commissioners to approve the rezone. It included the conditions of approval that were set forth in the SEPA and allowed the county to enter in a condition of approval for additional monitoring and treatment associated arsenic in the drinking water. The county has 30 days to comply with the court order. On January 16th the BOCC will adopt an ordinance to approve the rezone with those conditions.

Last week on the 2nd, staff held a community meeting in Mineral to help them understand what the court order entails. Since the county is being ordered to approve the rezone, there will be no testimony taken at the meeting on the 16th. Commissioner Corbin praised staff for how they conducted the meeting and noted that the community responded well.

Mindy shared Community Development's Strategic Vision. This vision was developed by staff over several meetings to explain what we think is important and how we function. Our motto is Great Service Daily. There's two big parts to this. The first is the work that the Planning Commission advises on, which includes long range planning, comprehensive planning, and development regulation updates. When staff bring items to the Planning Commission, it has been well vetted through the public. Great Service Daily means that the public knows what we're doing, and it has an opportunity to participate, not just at the hearing stage, but all the way through the process. In fact, a lot of the things that we bring before the Planning Commission are identified by the public. The other work that Community Development does is process development permits. We're the front counter - we are where people come to obtain their building permits and we are the people who do the building inspections. So we're with the public all the time in that portion of our work and it is extremely important that we are providing Great Service Daily, as reflected in our mission and values. Commissioner Skutley commented on the positive experience he had with Lewis County when building his home and barn.

Lee shared about the Process Improvement Team's history and accomplishments (*see report for details*). She shared the purpose of the team, as established in the charter, and highlighted the improved processes that were worked on in 2023. As noted in the report, some of the processes that were improved included creating an online building inspection request, streamlining water system plan reviews, brainstorming a permitting online portal, streamlining the building plan review with electronic options, and updating webpages. Looking forward, the team plans to address improving communication and permit review between departments and the public, digitizing records to make them available to the public, process changes as a result of Senate Bill 5290, as well as the items that will be brought before the Planning Commission.

Mindy shared 2023 permitting data which showed that the building permits issued this year were down slightly from the past two years, but still consistent. She also showed a graph of the 2023 permits issued by type.

Commissioner Spogen asked what the measurement was for success in permitting. Lee responded that staff set goals to review planning applications within 2 weeks. Once the planning review is complete, an individual can then apply for a building or septic permit. The building department tries to get the building permit issued in 3-4 weeks. Lee also noted that success sometimes is not tied to timing but is more about the experience and relationships created and maintained.

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Russell expressed frustration about how city jurisdictions are managing critical areas due to a lack of training and resources. Russell asked if the county could do anything about these issues. Mindy responded that the county does not have jurisdiction over the cities, but the cities do have to comply with critical areas. They have to update their Critical Areas Ordinance this year as part of the comprehensive update, but the smaller jurisdictions can choose to use the county's ordinance as well as our mapping.

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur January 23, 2024, and the agenda item is a workshop on the Rural Housing Alternative.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Russell made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.