

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 12, 2024 - Meeting Notes

Planning Commissioners Present: Lorie Spogen, District 1; Jason Alves, District 1; Gretchen Fritsch, District 3; Frank Corbin, District 3; Jeff Skutley, District 2; Bob Russell, District 2; Roger Moore, At-Large

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Office Assistant Senior; Lee Napier, Director of Community Development; Eric Eisenberg, Housing & Infrastructure Specialist

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – February 27, 2024
- Staff Presentation: Comprehensive Plan Update
- Staff Presentation: Training
- RHA Transmittal Letter

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.

Chair Corbin welcomed the new commissioner, Roger Moore, to the Planning Commission and asked him to provide a brief introduction.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Spogen made the motion to approve the agenda; second by Commissioner Skutley. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from February 27, 2024. Staff noted that there were a few edits suggested by Eric Eisenberg to be considered changes to the notes. Commissioner Spogen made a motion to approve the notes as amended, second by Commissioner Skutley. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Transmittal Letter – RHA

Chair Corbin asked for feedback from the Commissioners on the draft transmittal letter for the Rural Housing Alternative, which was provided to the commissioners on March 1st. There was consensus that the letter captured all the information the Planning Commissioners wanted to be transmitted to the Board of County Commissioners.

7. Workshop – Comprehensive Plan Update

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long-Range Planner, gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (*see presentation for details*). Throughout the presentation the commissioners asked the following questions.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the Growth Management Act was written from scratch by Washington legislation or was it copied from other states. Mindy responded that it was written from scratch, but it borrows from many other states. Mindy noted that from her experience in working in Oregon, their Growth Management Act is very similar.

Commissioner Spogen asked what ILA means. Mindy responded that it stands for Interlocal Agreement. The ILA is how the county and cities co-manage the Urban Growth Area (UGA). If the city wants the ability to apply their zoning and process development permits in the UGA, then the county must have an interlocal agreement with the city to give them official authority to do so. The ILA allows the cities to do their Capital Facility Planning in an easier way because they know what the zoning and densities will be in the UGAs. The county is currently working on updating the ILAs to be consistent in process and then will extend the option to more cities.

Commissioner Skutley asked what type of review there have been to determine if Urban Growth Area boundary changes have been successful, using the past Winlock UGA expansion as an example. Mindy responded that UGA decisions are made by the county. The decision is based on the Land Capacity Analysis and whether there is sufficient land to accommodate 20 years of growth. UGA boundary amendments come before the Planning Commission who will hold a public hearing and then make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. Skutley commented that last time Winlock expanded their UGA they were losing population.

Mindy responded that she couldn't speak to the last time Winlock expanded their UGA because it was well before Mindy was on staff. All the cities and the county are currently working on the Land Capacity Analysis and will know more soon about if the UGAs are rightsized for anticipated growth. The analysis will come to the Planning Commission for review and comment. After the County adopts the UGA, that land should be annexed into the city limits over the next 20 years. If there is no intention to annex, then the land should not be in the UGA.

Commissioner Russell noted that he plans to bring forward critical thinking and questions about potential UGA expansions since the Planning Commission has a pertinent role in the decision-making process. In the past, he did not realize the amount of authority he had in making these decisions. Mindy responded that it is important that Planning Commissioners be very critical of the UGA requests put before them.

Commissioner Corbin asked if cities could trade UGAs. Mindy responded that cities are allowed to do annual "swaps" as long as the land they are acquiring is no bigger than the area they are letting go, the area has no more than 15% critical areas and the land capacity analysis shows that the resulting UGA is no larger than is necessary. Annual swaps can be a smart decision because historically the UGAs have included floodplain, which is not developable.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process is all legislative. Mindy responded that there could be some quasi-judicial items, but none have been identified at this time. Mindy will give advance notice if she believes there will be something coming that the Commissioners need to be aware of.

Commissioner Skutley asked if the updates will be looking at specific areas of the county at a time. Mindy responded that it will be more likely to be topic specific than geographic specific; with the exception of the UGAs which are geographic in nature.

Commissioner Spogen asked what would happen if a Planning Commissioner wanted to add something to a Transmittal Letter after the Planning Commission had already agreed to send it forward to the Board of County Commissioners. Mindy responded that it will be dependent on what the topic is. Mindy encouraged the commissioners to reach out to her if that scenario comes up and then staff will figure out the best avenue to make their thoughts known.

Commissioner Skutley asked if they are allowed to talk to the County Commissioners. Mindy responded that it is important to keep the processes official. If the Planning Commission is in deliberation on a topic, it is important to complete that process and make recommendations without discussion with the BOCC. On legislative matters, there are no legal reasons to prevent a Planning Commissioner from talking to a County Commissioner, but it could negatively affect the process or could be perceived as creating bias. On quasi-judicial matters, the Planning Commissioners should not be talking to the County Commissioners about the topic for any reason. In terms of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, staff will be providing the BOCC with updates on what the Planning Commission is discussing/working on so that they can be informed throughout the process and be prepared when it comes to them for decision.

Commissioner Corbin shared with the other Planning Commissioners that since the Planning Commission gets into the details and does a thorough vetting process, the recommendation being presented to the BOCC should capture all the identified potential issues. Therefore, there is no need to lobby the BOCC. They trust us to do our job and bring them the very best work. If the BOCC needs more information they will go to staff.

8. Training

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long-Range Planner for Lewis County gave a training presentation on public interest (*see presentation for details*). Throughout the presentation the commissioners asked the following questions.

Commissioner Russell stated that rural perspective is relative.

Commissioner Fritsch noted that weighing all the public interests is very difficult but she values being part of the process.

Commissioner Corbin noted that the training received in advance of an issue has been very helpful in preparing for situations.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

There was nothing from staff for the good of the order.

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Russell welcomed Commissioner Moore and thanked him for volunteering to be part of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Corbin shared that he will be out of town for the next meeting and will chair the meeting virtually.

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on March 26, 2024, and the agenda item is a workshop on the Public Engagement Plan for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

Mindy noted that there may be some amended agendas for future meetings as the county works through the Comprehensive Plan update, but staff would try to limit the number of times agendas are amended so that the Planning Commissioners can come prepared.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Spogen made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.