

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

May 28, 2024 - Meeting Notes

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

Planning Commissioners Excused: Frank Corbin, District 3;

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 – May 14, 2024

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 as presented. Commissioner Spogen made the motion to approve the agenda as presented; second by Commissioner Moore. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from May 14, 2024. Commissioner Moore made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Spogen. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Workshop – Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Land Capacity Analysis

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

Commissioner Skutley asked if staff have looked back to reflect on how the land capacity analysis has resulted over time, specifically in relation to Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and the city of Winlock. Mindy responded that the county's role is to use the population allocations that are adopted by BOCC, and the land capacity analysis provided by the cities to determine whether there is sufficient capacity to serve the population over the next 20 years based on the zoning in the UGA. If there is not sufficient capacity, the city can either change their zoning or request an UGA expansion. The goal is to accommodate anticipated growth and for the city to annex the UGA over the next 20 years. Since the population allocation is reevaluated every five years, the UGA can be adjusted – increased or shrunk - or UGA areas can be swapped to best accommodate population growth. This five-year reevaluation is an opportunity to reflect on the population allocations and the UGAs. Skutley asked if the population allocation will change in five years if the population of Winlock has decreased. Mindy responded yes, in five years OFM will give each county new 20-year predictions, and at that point we will recalibrate. Mindy encouraged the Planning Commission to heavily scrutinize the land capacity analysis results and ask many questions about alternatives considered.

Commission Russell asked Mindy to explain more about the market factor. Mindy gave an example of single-family zoning, which allows someone to have one single-family home and two ADUs; however not everyone is going to build out to the maximum allowed capacity. By applying a market factor, we assume what will realistically be built in those zones. The assumptions are made based on state guidance or historical trends.

Commissioner Spogen asked if each jurisdiction is responsible for providing the opportunity for zoning to allow the required levels of housing but is not responsible for ensuring that it gets built out. Mindy confirmed this is correct. Commissioner Russell asked if a property is in the UGA and is never built out to the density intended if it would put an artificial pressure on the cost of the real estate. Mindy responded that the point of the UGA is to constrain where urban density of development goes, and the result is that the UGA can drive up property values within the UGA.

Commissioner Spogen asked what happens to the zoning if the UGA is withdrawn and returned to the county. Mindy responded that the property would be rezoned to a rural density determined by the county, rather than keeping it at the urban density. Mindy added that areas not developing to urban densities and not providing services to, should be removed from the

UGA and rezoned to rural density because the cities are still planning in their capital facilities plan to serve those area. This negatively impacts the way cities do their taxes and budgeting. Spogen asked if Lewis County is required to notify the property owner if their property is being rezoned. Mindy responded that property owners will be notified of rezones. If a property owner in the UGA was notified that their property was being taken out of the UGA, there may be some who are negatively impacted because they wanted to build out at a higher density and there may be some who are positively impacted because they did not want to be in an urban area.

Commissioner Fritsch asked how Packwood would be affected if sewer was not able to be put in. Mindy responded that until sewer is a sure thing, a UGA cannot be applied to Packwood. However, Packwood does not have to demonstrate that the service exists today, only that the County can serve it over the next 20 years. Packwood is currently zoned as Small Town Mixed Use (STMU) zoning which allows for a lot of development. Spogen clarified that a single-family home can still be built without sewer. Mindy confirmed that is correct.

Commissioner Moore asked if an area should be taken out of the UGA if the city does not think they can or will serve it over the next 20 years. Mindy responded that yes, it is generally her recommendation that area that cannot be served by urban services be removed from the UGA. Commissioner Spogen noted that cities may have every intention of serving an area, but five years later realize they were wrong and need to make adjustments. Mindy added that development is largely driven by infrastructure and infrastructure is often paid for by developers. The private/public partnership comes into play significantly in the UGA. Commissioner Alves asked if the cities choose to expand the UGAs where developers want to go because it reduces the burden on taxpayers. Mindy responded that sometimes this is the case, but over the years there has been different approaches to UGA expansions.

Commissioner Russell asked if, by approving a large population growth, we are driving larger UGAs in Chehalis. Mindy responded that the allocations for Chehalis were based on projects already in the pipeline. The county questioned if Chehalis was going to be able to serve this large number and Chehalis was adamant that they could. Russell asked if Chehalis or Winlock had kept their numbers smaller, would that give the county more authority to reduce their UGAs. Mindy responded that it is important for cities to try to accurately estimate population growth to not be too large or too small. That way the UGAs are right sized to accommodate anticipated growth.

Commissioner Alves reiterated that population allocations are an imperfect science, but it is constantly being reevaluated. Market conditions change very quickly. It is hard to predict exactly what will happen.

Commissioner Alves asked if staff believes the high turnover rate of staff at the City of Chehalis has been attributed to the difference in their numbers and methodology. Mindy responded that because she just got the numbers from Chehalis on Friday, she hasn't had time to look at their methodology, but it was their city council that asked for the higher population allocation. Alves

added that there will be a new city manager in a week and there has been high turnover in the city council. Alves asked if Chehalis is asking for too high a population allocation in order to get funding for the infrastructure since they are currently behind. Mindy responded that it is a balancing act because a larger number will help with state grants, but it will hurt when it comes to taxes and vice versa. The county encouraged the cities to be as right as they could be when going into the population allocation conversations.

Commissioner Fritsch asked how affordability of housing is determined. Mindy responded that we are not being asked to demonstrate that we can produce housing that's affordable at all income levels, but that we are zoning to allow it, such as zoning for multi-family housing. Fritsch responded that since multi-family housing can only be done in urban areas, the rural areas will not be able to have the same opportunities for affordable housing. Mindy responded yes, that is correct. The only thing the county can do to try to allow for more housing in rural zoning is the Rural Housing Alternative and trying to add infrastructure in LAMIRDs.

Commissioner Russell asked if when a city comes forward with a UGA expansion proposal, can the Planning Commission suggest that they expand in a different area, such as up on top of the hill. Mindy responded that the Planning Commission should ask questions of the jurisdiction to understand why and how they chose the area they would like to expand into and then ask follow up questions to determine if there is a better location for urban development.

Commissioner Alves asked staff how the lack of continuity in leadership in some jurisdictions affects the comprehensive plan periodic update and population allocations. Mindy responded that the goal is to use a methodology that is easily replicable regardless of who is in leadership. The county gave the cities a very straightforward land capacity analysis methodology to complete, but we did not do that for population allocation. However, the leadership may have differing opinions about what changes are best for addressing shortfalls in capacity. Alves asked how the cities received the counties direction on the methodology. Mindy responded that the county gave the cities the options to either allow the county to do land capacity analysis for them or they could use the methodology provided by the County. The cities chose to use the methodology provided.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy reminded the Commissioners that Lee's retirement party is May 29th at 11:30am in the BOCC Hearing Room and is open to the public. Lee thanked the Commissioners for their work on the Planning Commission and praised them for all they do.

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Spogen asked about the progress on the Packwood Subarea Plan. Mindy responded that the BOCC passed the Subarea Plan and staff is working on Phase Two, which will

be adopted with the rest of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Spogen then asked about a letter she received from the Assessor's office about income made related to a property she owns in Packwood. Spogen asked if this was a way that the county was trying to collect information about short term rentals in Packwood related to the subarea plan. Mindy responded that the letter was for Assessor purposes only and was not related to the subarea plan.

Commissioner Skutley shared about a TV show called Escape to the County, which is about land use planning in the UK where they have lost all their farmland.

Commissioner Alves shared a statistic that about \$136,000 of building a home in Washington is due to government regulation. In terms of affordable housing, it is important to recognize the governments impact and how little impact zoning decisions will have on housing affordability.

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on June 11, 2024, and the agenda item is a workshop on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Land Capacity Analysis and Housing Needs Assessment.

Commissioner Corbin will be absent on June 11th.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Spogen made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 p.m.