

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

August 27, 2024 - Meeting Notes

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

BOCC Members: Commissioner Scott Brummer, Commissioner Lindsay Pollock, Ryan Barrett (Lewis County Manager)

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Director of Community Development; Katie Johnson, Office Assistant Senior.

Others: Clay White (Kimley-Horn), Joel Farias

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – August 13, 2024
- September 29, 2023, Planning Commission/BOCC Joint Work Session Meeting Notes
- Community Engagement Results (electronic)

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 as presented; second by Commissioner Spogen. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from August 13, 2024. Commissioner Russell 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 Update – Joint Planning Commission/BOCC Work Session

A. Staff Presentation: Clay White, Lewis County's Consultant from Kimley-Horn, gave a presentation (*see presentation for details*).

The goal is to complete this project by June of next year, 2025. Currently, we are in the first two stages of revising to meet state law, clean up and condense; and incorporate input: Community, County Dept., PC, BOCC. We will move into the final stage of final review in November-January. Mindy Brooks reminded the group of the Joint Session that was held last year on September 26, 2023, and the priorities that were discussed regarding energy, water availability, UGAs, short-term rentals/single family-regs, developing I-5, resource lands, objective design standards.

B. Group Exercise:

Clay White dismissed the group into smaller groups for side discussions based on the Comprehensive Plan elements. Please also see the attachment for additional notes.

Land Use, Rural, and Housing Breakout Session: (*Groups are Russell and Fritsch, Corbin and Pollock, Alves and Brummer, Skutley and Spogen, Barrett and Moore*)

Commissioner Brummer would like to see clarification on what it would mean and/or look like to focus on large, scaled development near I5. He would like to see that type of development not be limited to just the I5 corridor. Commissioner Russell agreed that industrial development should be encouraged outside of the I5 corridor along other major arterials.

Commissioner Brummer stated the county does already have a senior citizen deferment for reducing the tax burden. He does not like the idea of reducing tax burdens because it suggests a redistribution of wealth. Commissioner Fritsch would like to explore different ways that lessen the impact of non-residents buying up houses for short term rentals and increasing the tax burden on the remaining residents. Commissioner Russell stated there could be an option to reduce taxes by bringing in big businesses that generate new taxes.

Commissioner Russell stated the topic of rural character is difficult to define. Commissioner Fritsch suggested that rural character should not be tied to just aesthetic, but also to how it makes the community feel. It's not just density of development that matters and higher density housing can be part of rural character.

Commissioner Russell recommended that smaller jurisdictions bring issues related to critical areas (e.g., floodplains and wetlands) to the county before the state intervenes. Commissioner Brummer expressed that it is more difficult to do that when the Department of Ecology oversees the certain areas. Mindy Brooks said this could be included in the plan under "shared resources," where two jurisdictions can come together and hire a consultant to use as they both want.

Commissioner Pollock stated there could be a rezoning of the property next to the I5 corridor to maintain the high-density zoning. She also would like to see Flood Maps updated to reflect the current areas and recent floods. She also mentioned there should be an update to municipal water and sewer availability in LAMRIDS. Commissioner Pollock stated the county can improve development standards, easing the burden on cluster development in rural developments, and shift from property tax to sales tax where available to achieve priorities. Commissioner Corbin mentioned defining affordable housing is important without just focusing on low-income housing. There should be an encouragement of diverse housing.

Commissioner Moore stated he would like to see major infrastructure being developed on other large arterials as well as on the I5 corridor. He does not want to see major infrastructure being developed in smaller towns with limited access in and out. He also mentioned that floodplain maps and critical areas need more attention as currently used maps are out of date.

Commissioner Skutley did mention that developments like Cardinal Glass are a prime example of infrastructure being located away from I5; although Commissioner Pollock noted that Cardinal Glass is very close to I5.

Commissioner Spogen agreed with Commissioner Fritsch's comments about rural character. Commissioner Spogen stated that it is difficult to monitor affordable housing when the market affects it so greatly.

Finally, Commissioner Fritsch asked that the County treat short term rentals as transient housing because STRs are not housing. Mindy clarified that currently STRs are regulated as a type of housing although they are a commercial use more similar to a motel or bed and breakfast. Mindy added that the County does limit where hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts are allowed and if STRs were treated similarly then in many areas like High Valley, STRs would require a Special Use Permit.

Transportation, Capital Facilities, Utilities Breakout Session: *(Groups are Russell and Fritsch, Corbin and Pollock, Alves and Brummer, Skutley, Spogen, and Moore)*

Commissioner Spogen stated increasing transit to the East side of the county is not always economically feasible for everyone. Commissioner Brummer stated a rebuttal of the transit issue that millions of dollars from many different entities are being poured into the Lewis County Transit. The transit system is being further developed to reach further locations within the city. Mindy Brooks said that in her community meetings with the rural communities including

Onalaska, Mineral and Packwood, the citizens are asking for transit service. Commissioner Skutley asked if there is any plan to expand Highway 12. Commissioner Brummer stated that there are plans in development, but it is a struggle to incorporate WSDOT into the conversation

All commissioners agreed that water and sewer are very important for improving infrastructure and needs revisions and/or additions.

Commissioner Russell asked for clarification on what the point is of "New goal to promote restoration and construction of schools to provide community services." Mindy Brooks responded stating it is referring to the services schools provide such as parks and recreation, as well as emergency evacuation centers. These are important in rural areas where other facilities may be much further away.

Commissioner Alves would like to see more clarification in the codes currently without restricting people too tightly.

Resource Lands, Natural Environment combined with Economic Development, Climate, and Resiliency Breakout Session: *(Groups are Russell and Fritsch, Corbin and Pollock, Alves and Brummer, Skutley, Spogen, and Moore)*

Mindy Brooks stated that the county is focused on hazard management regarding Climate Resiliency.

Commissioner Brummer agreed the focus should be on all four of these topics and the policy changes, however the "how" is what can be discussed. Commissioner Alves asked if there were options to turn the wetlands into recreational spaces that can still be enjoy by the public.

Commissioner Russell would like to work with the County and City of Chehalis to move new develop up on the hill and out of the floodplain. There is a route up the hill and new development is more appropriate out of the lowlands that flood. Clay White responded if they were studied outside of the Comp Plan Update.

Commissioner Fritsch mentioned that the county does not have the infrastructure to support the ever-growing tourism. Mindy Brooks stated that the county plans based on the population of full-time residents which negates the second homeowners and tourism. This is a gap in how the Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to plan and makes it difficult to plan based on tourism impacts.

Commissioner Pollock stated that if we are focusing on recreation and tourism opportunities, we need to look at limiting visual pollution with light and man-made structures.

Commissioner Pollock and Corbin both stated that solar powered roofing materials should be encouraged. Commissioner Spogen mentioned there are solar farms that would be available to the community to buy into. She also mentioned that the state may allow more options regarding solar whereas the county does not. Mindy Brooks replied stating that there are adjustments that

can be made to this aspect of the code.

Commissioner Moore mentioned through his volunteering with the county's Emergency Management, they are preparing to provide community outreach on the topic of Wildland Urban Interface regarding wildfires. He recommends adding a mitigation assessment apart of the permit process like other counties to prevent wildfires in the rural communities that are surrounded by trees.

Commissioner Skutley stated that the UGA should have tighter limits in terms of conservation and resource lands. He also mentioned the responsibility of providing broadband shouldn't necessarily belong to the jurisdiction it is in. He states additional water and sewer are larger priorities.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff: Mindy shared that there will be a few code amendments to SB5290 coming soon. This will set time frames to the permitting process. Mindy also mentioned that there will be a code change to private roads. 5290 will be enacted on January 1, 2025.

**All comments and suggestions made during this meeting have been captured by Joel Farias through Padlet and have been attached to the end of these meeting notes.*

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Russell stated he appreciates the process of the Planning Commission and the diverse views and help form the county.

C. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on September 10, 2024, and the agenda item is a public hearing on the 2045 Population and Housing Allocation Reconciliation.

Commissioner Russell will not attend the next meeting.

D. Adjourn

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

DRAFT

Notes 08/27/2024

↻ Land Use/Rural

Additional Priorities:

Possibly 1-2 miles outside of I-5 limit high density.
 Consider other major arterials (Hwy 12 and 6) for other large scale developments.
 Find creative ways and additional funding mechanisms for funding and constructing infrastructure in LAMIRDS and other rural areas.
 Consider more creative solutions for large scale developments outside of I-5 corridors.
 Consider creative developments and further design standards for commercial and other large developments along I-5 and major arterials.

Clarifications to be addressed:

Clarifications on what type of improvements along I-5. Why would someone not be able to build a major industrial development outside of the I-5 corridor. Most current major development is being built outside I-5 corridor. If regulations were in place to limit I-5 corridor development, how would existing industrial developments outside I-5 would work?
 Provide more clarity on vicinity of industrial development policies.
 There is more space outside of I-5 for large developments.

"What is rural character?" Not an aesthetic, not a drive-by beautiful scene. **Rural character should be clarified as a sense of place, a lifestyle, and culture.** "WAC 365-196-425 is where Rural Character is defined. It can be modified in each rural element to express local circumstances. Maybe we need to see if the definition needs to be modified in the comp plan"

Density is not something that could impact rural character if denser developments are built with similar sense of character.

Clearly delineate rural land designations using clear standards and market factors. (Clear urban/rural limits)

Are these rural policies supposed to increase the population in rural lands?

Suggested Actions:

Resources to aid in critical areas protection is extremely low. The county should write policy to create a better coordination pathway for cities and counties to protect critical areas. Ultimately, shared resources is the goal so that the county and city can work together to map critical areas and increase existing critical area data.
 Increase funding mechanisms for critical areas mapping and standards to improve resources that counties and cities can offer to constituents.

Consider large scale developments to fund water and sewer pipe extensions through residential developments. Extend municipal water and sewer in LAMIRDS.

⇒ **Housing**

Additional Priorities:

Attempt to reduce taxes by attracting large industrial developments.
Prioritize more housing types as well as affordable, and low-income housing.
Diversity of housing options very important.

Clarifications to be addressed:

Affordable housing definition.
How exactly would short term rentals be identified? This should be part of policy updates. Clearly identify what STRs are being mentioned here. Is it owner occupied homes, which are only used as a STR for one season? Or are these full time STRs? Or are the STRs mentioned here ones that are being proposed and haven't been built yet?

Suggested Actions:

Decrease focus on "redistribution of wealth".
Increase focus on short term rentals as commercial.
Improving development standards.
Shift from property tax to sale tax where possible. Due to difficulty of cutting property taxes for the county.
An example of alternative taxes on properties are graduated taxes (example in Texas).
Explore further funding mechanisms to support programs.
See how other jurisdictions manage STRs and identify them.

Establish policy to manage short-term rentals and the definition of short term rentals. Explore how transient uses are built in existing residential uses. Consider re-defining STRs to increase the difficulty of building them, possibly even have a positive impact on neighborhoods.

⇒ **Transportation**

Additional Priorities:

Eliminate arterials in downtown areas.
Highway 12 solutions like widening, and improvements to road conditions.

Clarifications to be addressed:

How expensive would providing public transit to east and south county? Would public transit to these parts decrease the rural character?

Suggested Actions:

Driver assist features, expand uber/lyft opportunities or advertisement for elderly/disabled to improve transportation flows. Should be a priority to increase roads leaving the county. Suggested truck routes. Consider alternative funding methods to improve transportation infrastructure. Increase actions taken to provide infrastructure and utilities to service whats in the current UGAs and existing neighborhoods. Perhaps provide a low hanging fruit list about current issues that should be fixed today.

Other:

Agree with improved traffic flow. Millions of dollars are coming into county to increase transit in the county. Transit plan already approved out to east county and ski areas. Senior and disabled transit and transportation methods also approved.

⇒ **Capital Facilities and Utilities**

Additional Priorities:

Incineration should be allowed, see examples from other countries. Could also provide electricity as well and cleanly dispose waste. Water and sewer extensions should be built outside of UGAs.

Clarifications to be addressed:

Clarify how schools provide community services. How do these policies and conversations turn into real life action?

Suggested Actions:

Prioritize funding for communication systems. would help with traffic (more people would be able to work-from-home) and would help financially, with more businesses coming to Lewis County.

Other:

County is already doing a great job with capital facilities. Increase broadband

⇒ **Resource Lands**

Additional Priorities:

Enforcement on conservation.

Clarifications to be addressed:

How can we do all of the suggested policies and write all of these policies between resource lands through climate/resiliency?

How can wetlands be turned into recreational spaces and be usable by the public?

Suggested Actions:

Analysis on farms and Ag land to correctly identify them as such.
Limit UGA expansion to increase conservation.

Other:

Set-up an exercise with the planning commission and BOCC for them to prioritize the most important policy changes from all sessions.

⇒ **Natural Environment**

Additional Priorities:

Clarifications to be addressed:

Suggested Actions:

Other: generally all accepting of possible policies and policy changes in for natural environment.

⇒ **Economic Development**

Additional Priorities:

Increase infrastructure in heavily tourist traffic areas.
Add policy to decrease light and sight pollution with increase in tourism.

Clarifications to be addressed:

What type of grants can the county and cities go after together to help both jurisdictions?

Suggested Actions:

Require infrastructure if recommending policy changes to increase development near I-5, tourism, and green industries.
Consider strategies on how to include tourist population in GMA planning to better plan for how many people actually use the infrastructure.

Other:

Coordinate with developers and increase funding for critical infrastructure developments. Little to no support for tourists and residents in small cities and rural areas.
Less talk about using tax dollars on broadband.
Should focus more on pushing people to buy private cell and wifi services, like starlink.

Local communities not wanting solar farms. Possible opportunity for solar farms in Lewis county. Consider

improving solar construction processes in the county.

⇒ **Climate and Resiliency**

Additional Priorities:

Open and encourage solar roofing materials in all roofs in the County. Especially with so many old homes with rood replacements soon. Increase urban interface and Firewise education, especially with growth happening within forested areas.

Clarifications to be addressed:

Suggested Actions:

Increase signage in fish bearing streams and high habitat level wetlands and other critical areas. Clearly delineate floodplains, don't allow development in floodplain, and aid in existing floodplain issues. Help/subsidize solar roofing for eligible out-of-date roofing.

Other:

Mindy clarified climate and resiliency efforts in the county are completely focused on hazard mitigation for fire and flood risks. Increase public outreach and engagement on fire mitigation and hazard planning. Think about how tree cutting requirements affect homes surrounded in trees during wildfires (homes completely surrounding by trees could be severely affected by wildfires).

