

# Lewis County Planning Commission

## Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**January 28, 2025 - Meeting Notes**

**Planning Commissioners Present:** Jason Alves, District 1; Jeff Skutley, District 2; Lorie Spogen, District 1; Frank Corbin, District 3

**Planning Commissioner Excused:** Roger Moore, At-Large; Gretchen Fritsch, District 3

**Staff Present:** Mindy Brooks, Director of Community Development; Guilherme Motta, Senior Long-Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Administrative Assistant

### Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – January 14, 2025
- [2017 Comprehensive Plan](#) (online only)
- [Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Policy Change Poster](#) (online only)
- Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Memo

### 1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

### 2. Call to Order

- A. Determination of a Quorum

5 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum.

### 3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda for January 28, 2025. Commissioner Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

### 4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes for January 14, 2025. Commissioner

Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded 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**

Erin O’Kelly & Heidi Rous from Kimley-Horn gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. (*See presentation for details*). The following questions and discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Russell commented that he would like the big picture overview at the beginning of each meeting to help keep him on track of where the conversation is currently at and where it is moving next.

Commissioner Russell asked how the Planning Commission and BOCC priorities are being incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan. Erin responded that they looked at where the priorities would best integrate into the existing policies.

Commissioner Skutley asked what a conservation subdivision is. Erin responded that it is a subdivision where they clump residential lots together. Mindy added that it’s called cluster subdivisions in Lewis County. Lewis County allows a property owner to create smaller than normally allowed lots if they are preserving a larger portion of the parent lot as open space.

Commissioner Corbin suggested that the county look at how to expand water systems to allow for the placement of more fire hydrants to prepare buildings against potential fire hazards. Staff responded that the Planning Commissioners should express things they would like to see in the Comprehensive Plan, such as increased fire hydrants, so that staff can direct them to those sections for a deeper review of the plan. Since the Comprehensive Plan is so extensive, the commissioners will not be able to do in-depth reviews of every section. Therefore, letting staff know in advance can help staff tailor content to each commissioner.

Commissioner Russell commented that there are always two sides to consider when implementing policies. For example, staff make the point of consolidating services, but the people don’t want to be consolidated. Russell would like to see discussion on how to balance these decisions.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the Planning Commission could discuss consolidation of the smaller fire districts in Lewis County. Mindy responded that the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners have no authority over the special districts. However, the county does coordinate with the fire districts in capital facilities planning.

Commissioner Alves expressed concern about the disconnect between regulations and the real-world application. He does not want to add unnecessary regulations that make it harder for the

average person or that could be created with good intentions but later changed by different leadership. Alves noted the financial concern of adding regulations for building.

Commissioner Spogen asked how the Planning Commission will vote on the Comprehensive Plan. Mindy responded that it will be voted on in its entirety, not by each individual goal/policy.

Commissioner Skutley asked how to get water and fire hydrants out in the county. Mindy responded that the county manages not only rural areas, but also Urban Growth Areas and LAMIRDs. Skutley stated that there's no water lines or fire hydrants in the UGAs. Mindy responded that as UGAs are developed with urban infrastructure, water is extended to those areas.

Commissioner Russell said that he would like the Comprehensive Plan written to make it hard for people to go to rural areas since it will be expensive. Russell said the plan has to have a balance to get out there with some restrictions.

Heidi shared that it is important to come to a consensus on the top priorities and then focus on those, rather than being a solution looking for a problem.

Commissioner Alves expressed a desire to have more preventative maintenance from the state in regard to fire hazards. Heidi responded that one of the keys to a successful implementation plan is to look for partnerships. Erin added that the county should look to expand development opportunities in areas that already have services.

Clay commented that most policies don't have to turn into regulations. The Comprehensive Plan is a proactive plan that looks at the next 20 years and what to do to prepare for it. When looking at the resiliency work, look at what the community members are concerned about and then look at what the county can do about it. The policies can be how coordination will occur with other agencies, looking for grant funding, deciding on common practices, etc.

Commissioner Alves asked what it means to retrofit buildings. Mindy responded that as upgrades are necessary, the county wants to upgrade to the best option in hopes that it will last the longest and be the best use of funds. Energy efficient HVAC systems are a good example.

Commissioner Alves brought up a concern of shifting to electric vehicle fleet and the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual ability for the grid to handle that transition. He asked how to make sure we aren't putting ourselves in a position where we don't have enough energy volume to serve or drive the cost up. Mindy responded that this has been an ongoing conversation with the Board of County Commissioners, and they share concerns. The Comprehensive Plan is looking at the next 20 years which can point to a long-term direction, but will not necessarily make any near-term changes. The county will not support making changes until the grid can support those changes. Commissioner Alves responded that there could be unintended consequences of adding things in for future decisions, that may be better dealt with when the time comes.

Commissioner Spogen asked what Lewis County's number one mission is. Mindy responded that it is to preserve rural character. The second mission is to preserve resource land. Rural character is

defined in the goals and policies.

Commissioner Skutley asked who broadband is for. Mindy responded that there was a larger conversation about making sure broadband is extended throughout the county. The county does not provide broadband, so the goals and policies are about coordination. Commissioner Corbin shared that through meetings he has been a part of the community expressed that broadband is a priority of theirs. Therefore, it should be a priority at the county level. Broadband helps to keep the rural county rural and reduces the amount of travel needed so it minimizes traffic. Commissioner Skutley suggested that there are other alternatives, not just broadband.

Commissioner Russell commented that a lot of work has been done in Lewis County in the last year in bioeconomy, bioproducts, fuels, and energy. Lewis County was recognized for an AA rating for woody biomass. He would like to consider some comment that reinforces natural resources and the use of that because of our timber industry.

Commissioner Corbin stated that he liked implementation example CR1.3 that is outcome based rather than prescriptive. The Commissioners discussed the effects that goals and policies have on regulations. Clay responded that there is an implementation portion of the Comprehensive Plan where they can be intentional about how the policies drive action.

## **7. Good of the Order:**

### **A. Staff**

Mindy reminded the Planning Commission that the April 8<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting will be held in Packwood.

### **B. Planning Commissioners**

Commissioner Russell gave an update that he is still working with Mindy on the transmittal letter for the Definition of a Qualified Professional and will bring that back to the Planning Commissioners when complete.

Commissioner Corbin asked the commissioners if they would self-impose a schedule to submit written questions to Mindy the Friday following receiving information from staff. Mindy will respond in writing by the end of day Monday before the meeting. This will help staff focus the presentation and discussion on topics the commissioners are interested in. The commissioners all agreed to this approach.

## **8. Calendar:**

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on February 11, 2025, and the agenda item will be a workshop on the Public Benefits Rating System and the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

## **9. Adjourn**

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

DRAFT