

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

February 11, 2025 - Meeting Notes

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

Planning Commissioner Excused:

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

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – January 28, 2025
- Public Benefits Rating System Memos
- Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Memo

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 for February 11, 2025. Commissioner Moore 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 28, 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

A. Public Benefits Rating System

Ross Neilson, Lewis County Assessor, provided an overview of the Public Benefits Rating System and the parcels being considered for Open Space designation. One parcel, 028177000000, was recommended by the PBRs Committee as meeting the qualifications; while the other parcel, 011390004000, was found by the PBRs Committee to not meet the qualifications. The details and scoring sheet were included in the staff report provided to the commissioners and posted on the webpage on February 3, 2025.

The commissioners asked questions about what qualifies or prevents a property from being designated as Open Space. Mindy directed the commissioners to review the PBRs materials sent in advance of the meeting, which outline the details. Commissioner Russel asked why property owners don't consider other tax programs rather than Open Space. Mindy responded that it is up to the property owner to apply to be part of any program and the committee to review that request.

B. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (Land Use)

Erin O'Kelley gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. (*See presentation for details*). The following questions and discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Russell asked about Centralia's Urban Growth Area (UGA) and what allows the county to reduce the UGA boundary. Centralia found through their land capacity analysis that they can accommodate the 20 year population within a smaller UGA and some portions of the existing UGA will be difficult to provide urban services over the next 20 years. Therefore, these areas are being removed from the UGA. Mindy added that it is much easier to reduce a UGA than to expand a UGA. As long as we can demonstrate the remaining UGA can accommodate the 20-year population for that jurisdiction, then a reduction is allowed.

Commissioner Alves asked how developers are impacted when a UGA is reduced and their property is removed. Mindy responded that changing UGA boundaries goes through a public process in which individuals have the opportunity to provide testimony to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. After receiving testimony, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners whether to approve or deny UGA changes. In Centralia's case, they have been doing research and discussing these changes for a few months.

Commissioner Moore asked if the Planning Commission has any role in Interlocal Agreements (ILAs). Mindy responded that the Planning Commission does not have a direct role. ILAs are agreed upon between the cities and the Board of County Commissioners. However, it is discussed in the Planned Growth Committee, which is an open public meeting that the Planning Commissioner are welcome to attend. These meetings also have meeting notes available to view afterwards. And Mindy is happy to provide updates to the Planning Commission.

Mindy shared additional information about the Industrial Park at TransAlta (IPAT) UGA, which is an industrial-only UGA that is not associated with any city. The county has been working with IPAT as they transition away from coal and move into whatever comes next. Some land in the current UGA will go to Forest Resource Land after it is reclaimed from mining uses. The county has also worked on redefining the spaces where future industrial development is possible and likely. In step 2, there will be an entirely new code section about energy production, since the county does not have a process for new energy production development at this time. Commissioner Corbin asked if staff is borrowing code from other jurisdictions. Mindy responded that yes, staff have gleaned from Jefferson and Yakima county. Commissioner Alves asked if there are any forestry management requirements that TransAlta is required to follow as owners of the land reclaimed to forest use. Mindy responded that all mines have a reclamation plan, which get negotiated with the state before the mining begins.

Commissioner Corbin asked about the new Park designation and who could afford to develop a park and keep it going. Mindy responded that the areas proposed as Open Space zoning are publicly owned land and/or already being used as parks. For example, Skate Creek in Packwood is zoned RDD-20. It is currently state owned, but the state has surplussed it in the past. It could be bought and developed. Changing the zoning to Park will prevent the kind of development that could happen with RDD-20.

Commissioner Fritsch asked about the number of septic hookups allowed in Packwood and asked if the restriction is dictated by the county. Mindy responded that the provision for septic hookups is to comply with state rules for Limited Areas of More Rural Development (LAMIRDs). LAMIRDs must retain the rural character the area had when the LAMIRD was applied, which was 1995 for Lewis County. Most LAMIRDs don't have multifamily housing, rowhouses or apartments. Letting the character of a LAMIRD change does not meet Growth Management Act definitions as they currently stand. Therefore, restricting multifamily housing to areas with sewer service helps meet the LAMIRD rules regarding rural character. Staff are actively trying to get the state laws to change to allow for more housing options in LAMIRDs. There are two LAMIRD housing bills in the legislature. Fritsch asked if the LAMIRD restrictions would go away if or when Packwood becomes a UGA. Mindy responded that yes, by applying the UGA and removing the LAMIRD restrictions, there's a lot more flexibility. However, it is important to consider how best to use the property in downtown Packwood in regard to septic drain fields/reserves. Centralized sewer or private LOSS/STEP systems would be appropriate to encourage high density residential development that protects the surrounding rural areas.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy discussed the upcoming schedule for the Commissioners and what materials should be reviewed before the next two meetings. She asked that questions on the Onalaska Subarea Plan and Packwood UGA be provided to staff by February 21 and that questions on the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies be provided to staff by February 28. This will allow staff to respond in writing, thus reducing the number of topics covered during the March 11 workshop, and to hone the workshop to topics that the commissioners are most interested in.

Mindy asked if the Planning Commission is comfortable with Bob and herself drafting a revised Qualified Professional definition, based on the Planning Commission's transmittal letter, to provide to the Board of County Commissioners without bringing it back to the Planning Commission for another hearing. The commissioners agreed because the draft definition would be the subject of a public hearing at the Board of County Commissioners, including noticing and availability of the definition to everyone, including the Planning Commissioners, prior to the hearing.

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

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Skutley talked about fire resilience on his property. He had a member of DNR come to his property who helped him. Skutley suggested that this is a positive option for people deal with fire dangers on their own properties.

Commissioner Moore shared that South Puget Sound Community College is putting together a 13-week residential construction training program.

8. Calendar:

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on February 25, 2025, and the agenda item will be a workshop on the Onalaska Subarea Plan and the Packwood UGA & Zoning.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 pm.