

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

February 25, 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

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 – February 11, 2025
- Onalaska Subarea Plan
- Staff Report – Packwood UGA & Zoning
- Lewis County Comprehensive Plan Internal Review Draft
- Lewis County Policy Matrix

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 25, 2025. Commissioner Alves made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes for February 11, 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. Onalaska Subarea Plan

Mindy Brooks, Lewis County Community Development Director, gave a presentation on the Onalaska Subarea Plan. *See presentation for details.* The following questions and discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Fritsch asked for clarification on why the Future Land Use and Proposed Zoning are exactly the same, and why they might be different. Mindy responded that typically the Future Land Use and Proposed Zoning are adopted at separate times, so they don't have to be the same, but Lewis County matches exactly most often.

Commissioner Spogen asked if there is currently multi-family housing in the residential high density. Mindy responded that there is no multi-family housing there currently. Spogen asked if staff anticipated that the landowner would be interested in developing multi-family housing and whether the properties are suitable for that development. Mindy responded the properties are suitable for multi-family housing. The landowner can provide testimony at the public hearing if they would like to express interest or disinterest.

Commissioner Russell asked for clarification on ADU allowability in residential low density zoned areas. Mindy responded that residential low density allows single family residences with up to two ADUs. Russell commented that he thinks that is a good option.

Commissioner Corbin asked if tiny homes have been considered in the residential medium density area. Mindy said that tiny homes would be allowed, but the county does not reach out to specific property owners to see what they plan on developing.

Commissioner Skutley asked about Open Space zoning around Carlisle Lake. Mindy responded that the area around the lake is county zoning, not part of the Onalaska Urban Growth Area. However, there are no proposed changes to the zoning around Carlisle Lake.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if everything in the Urban Growth Area is currently served by water and sewer. Mindy responded yes. However, there may be some exceptions for those who were grandfathered in.

Commissioner Russell asked if permits and critical areas are reviewed by the county. Mindy responded yes. The critical areas are not shown on the map, but the same rules apply to the

Onalaska Urban Growth Area that are currently being followed countywide. Russell commented that we want everyone to be aware of the critical areas.

Commissioner Skutley commented that it is necessary that trucks pulling trailers be able to move and park in downtown Onalaska. Mindy responded that trucks and trailers can be accommodated by putting large parking behind structures. There will be more details in the implementation and development regulations.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for implementing changes on Hwy 508. Mindy responded, yes. However, since this is an Urban Growth Area, the DOT must consider the adopted comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Corbin asked who initiates the traffic calming devices. Mindy responded that if it is on a state facility, it usually waits until the state does an update to the road. Onalaska will be updated in the next few years. However, staff has been working to get grant funding for Packwood since there are no future plans from the state to initiate that work.

Commissioner Skutley asked if there has been consideration for roundabouts to make it easier for trucks and trailers to turnaround on Hwy 508. Mindy responded that there should be an in depth study on traffic and then decisions can be made about engineering the roads.

Commissioner Skutley asked what the condition of the sewer facility is. Mindy responded that Lewis County Water/Sewer District #2 would be the best resource to find that information. The county considers if there are enough hookups and when capacity will be met. However, it will be up to LCWSD2 to make decisions about when expansion is necessary.

Commissioner Russell shared an anecdote that 20 years ago when he was about to move to Lewis County, a coworker said, "I've got one word for you - Onalaska." Russell commented that even twenty years ago Onalaska was a well-built town, and this Subarea Plan is making official the zoning that they have already established through the development of their town.

B. Packwood Urban Growth Area and Zoning

Mindy Brooks, Lewis County Community Development Director, gave a presentation on the Packwood Subarea Plan. *See presentation for details.* The following questions and discussion occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Russell shared that he appreciates the statement in both subarea plans that pre-existing development is grandfathered in. Mindy confirmed that legal nonconforming development and uses are vested and may persist.

Commissioner Fritsch asked why the county wouldn't be willing to incentivize multi-family housing to increase affordable housing. Mindy responded that the county would need to have money to do that. Fritsch followed up by asking if staff believe the only way to have multi-family housing in Packwood is to mandate it. Mindy responded that that is one way to help force multi-family

housing. A developer could choose to do multi-family housing, but the market is pushing towards single family residences right now. The market is just not producing multi-family housing.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the county could take steps to limit Short Term Rentals (STR). Mindy responded that yes, the county is willing to consider STR regulations, but nothing that is very strict. The county government has made progress in STR regulations, but there will not be a limit on the total number of STRs in Packwood.

Commissioner Fritsch commented that the vision for the subarea plan does not mention maintaining rural character. Mindy responded that the vision includes the small-town character pieces of it. Fritsch added that the community of Packwood acknowledged that the character needed to change in order to accommodate affordable housing. Mindy responded that certain elements are changed in specific portions of character. However, it is not a change in the overall rural character. There are a lot of policies in place to maintain small town character woven throughout the subarea plan. However, high density residential and 20,000 square foot commercial business cannot happen inside of a LAMIRD. Everything else in the subarea plan can be done under the LAMIRD.

Commissioner Fritsch commented that a quadplex fits the character of Packwood and is multifamily housing. Multifamily doesn't have to be 18 units. Mindy responded that yes, we can have design guidelines that make multi-family housing fit the character. However, it comes down to State law and if we say multi-family is required in certain zones in a LAMIRD, we will likely be appealed and lose.

Commissioner Corbin asked if the county has considered creating a housing authority in Lewis County to increase affordable housing. Mindy responded that no one has talked about it.

Commissioner Russell asked if the current LAMIRD is bigger than the UGA being proposed. Mindy responded that the larger area on the map on the screen is the subarea plan and the UGA only a portion of that. The area outside of the UGA and within the subarea plan would remain LAMIRD.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the property owners in the subarea plan be part of the conversation. Mindy responded that at this stage of the subarea plan, each property owner will receive a mailing letting them know about the zoning changes. In Phase I of the subarea plan, there were lots of public engagement events and outreach to try to allow property owners to share their thoughts, including two public hearings one of which was in Packwood. Fritsch asked if members of the public can appeal the zoning changes. Mindy responded that the public can come to testify during the hearing process. After a decision has been made by the Board of County Commissioners, an individual may appeal the decision if they believe the county has violated state law. It cannot be appealed because someone doesn't like it.

Commissioner Skutley asked if allowing two ADUs is different from other areas of Lewis County. Mindy responded that state law says two ADUs must be allowed in an Urban Growth Area where zoning is single-family residential.

Commissioner Skutley asked how many acres are being zoned high density. Mindy responded that she is not sure but can calculate that number. Skutley asked why we are focusing on this area if it is so small. Mindy responded that the Advisory Committee focused those areas down tight and put it far back from the highway so it would not impact the aesthetics of the town. Skutley replied that multifamily can be designed to fit the character.

Commissioner Alves asked if there has been a market study done to determine how many places need to go be built to affect the cost of housing. Mindy responded that no, that type of study has not been done.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Mindy reminded the Planning Commission that questions on the Comprehensive Plan Draft documents are due to staff on February 28th and staff will provide written responses on March 7th in advance of the workshop on March 11th.

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

B. Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Russell shared that he will be out of state on April 8th.

Commissioner Skutley shared an anecdote about an incident that occurred on his property.

Commissioner Corbin asked for an update on the Definition of Qualified Professional transmittal letter. Mindy shared that it is still under development and has not been sent to the Board of County Commissioners yet.

8. Calendar:

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on March 11, 2025, and the agenda item will be a workshop on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 pm.