

# Lewis County Planning Commission

## Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**September 13, 2022 - Meeting Notes**

**Planning Commissioners Present:** Lorie Spogen, District 1; Jason Alves, District 1; Gretchen Fritsch, District 3, Corbin Foster, AL; Bob Russell, District 2; Kathy Chastain, District 2; Frank Corbin, District 3;

**Staff Present:** Lee Napier, Community Development Director; Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Office Assistant Senior; Amber Smith, Prosecuting Attorney;

### **Materials Used:**

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – August 23, 2022
- Staff Presentation: LCC 17.12 Public Participation
- Staff Presentation: Housing Update

### **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.

Commissioner Chastain made the motion to approve the agenda; second by Commissioner Russell. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Approval of Meeting Notes**

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from August 23, 2022. Commissioner Corbin made a motion to approve; second by Commissioner Chastain. The motion carried unanimously.

## **5. Public Comment**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

## **6. Workshop**

### **A. Amendment to LCC 17.12 Public Participation**

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner for Lewis County Community Development gave a presentation on amendments to Lewis County Code 17.12 on Public Participation. *See presentation for details.*

*The following discussion occurred throughout the presentation.*

Russell: We go through the types of permits from Type I, II, III, IV, to Type V, which are the big elephants. Can you go back to that graph and talk through this process of why they weren't a Type I, II, III, or IV and then end up as a Type V?

Mindy: So this table is not all the possible actions, but it's a lot of the common ones summarized in one place. If somebody's asking to do something (e.g. grade a driveway) we can quickly see what type of permit is necessary.

Russell: Normally, you would come in for a house and you're looking at the left side of the graph at a Master Site Review.

Mindy: Yes, a Master Site Review is pretty common.

Russell: So that covers all the little stuff and then we get into the big stuff in the Type V applications.

Mindy: Right, we are only talking about the stuff in the red box. We are not going to talk about any of the processes or timelines for the other permits. We're leaving those all alone.

Russell: The Type V's seem big and important and I was just wondering what fell below there. Thank you for sharing that.

Spogen: This is going to be a format that we are going to look at and maybe the BOCC, but this isn't going to be in the code correct?

Mindy: No, the commentary will not be included in the code itself. This is just for you, BOCC, and the public to hopefully easily see the explanation for every code amendment.

Corbin: I like the format. I was wondering if there is a later action that there's some disagreement on what the code means, can these commentaries be used to substantiate one side or the other of a future disagreement?

Mindy: Do you mean during implementation? So when staff is implementing the code, if there's disagreement about the intent of the code?

Corbin: Yes.

Amber: Yes, this commentary here ends up like legislative intent. When you look at the RCWs it can help inform any kind of interpretation issue that can't be figured out based on the plain language of the code that's there. That kind of statutory instruction interpretation analysis that goes through is looking at the intent of the parties at the time they are drafting things. In past circumstances, for example, the Board of County Commissioners, or other types of code, we have had to go back and look and see what the minutes have said in meetings to get an idea about what was going on at the time and what the Board or staff were thinking of when they were implementing changes. That's essentially what this is. It memorializes that what we have here is the equivalent of legislative intent. So yes, it could be used if there's an interpretation issue.

Mindy: We always did commentary in my previous jurisdiction and it was referenced. Numerous times different pieces of commentary had been brought up during Hearings Examiner or during appeals. I would say if you want to provide comments on commentary you certainly can do that.

Spogen: If I was a public person looking at this I would be looking for something that says Type V. How come we wouldn't put that in the Summary of Amendments?

Mindy: If you were to go into the code you would start with General Provisions. We've got table 17.05-2 and there's a list of what can be done. The first one in the red box is site specific rezone/CP Map Amendment. That's a comprehensive plan amendment. And then it these are a Type 5. Then you go over to this other table and it would say it's a type V and it says go to 17.12. So that would be your research process to get you to 17.12 to see the full process.

Spogen: So if I was sitting at home and thinking about having a rezone, what should I do?

Mindy: You should call staff because rezones are super complicated.

Spogen: I have something that I think maybe falls under this category. When I read through the packet you gave us on several pages you says 14 days, 60 days, etc. rather than calendar days. I think we should say what kind of days we are talking about.

Mindy: Yes, we can certainly clarify that, I think there may have been something in the commentary as well, but that's something that comes up in my work too.

Spogen: In the packet it says that you may allow people to have an extension if they are not able to provide the complete application. How would that work with the docket due to the April cutoff? The county has 28 calendar days to tell the applicant if they have a complete application and then the applicant has 90 days to do the work to make it complete, but could get an extension. It says 17.12.040.

Mindy: These are primarily about rezones, but they also apply to UGAs. We have 28 days after receiving the rezone application. We'll mail them either with a determination of complete or incomplete application. If it is incomplete then the applicant has 90 days to respond and get their additional information submitted to complete the application. Then we move forward. If something is not complete by a certain date, then it will be moved to the next year's docket.

Spogen: So basically there's 4 months from the first of the year. If after 4 months they don't have the application complete they can get an extension so they don't have to start all over again, but they may not get on the docket until the next year.

Mindy: Yes. Moving to the next year's docket is because there's a deadline that we must meet in order to get the rezone through Planning Commission, SEPA, and Board of County Commissioners by the end of the year. So we do want to be clear with people that there's a real deadline for rezones and UGAs and there's no time to process things if we don't have them done by a certain date.

Russell: Sometimes we get confused where we're at in the level of severity. If somebody's trying to do something that is in the Type V area and they don't have their act together by four months, that's not the same as somebody trying to buy a house that's doing an MSR that's a Type II or Type III so I think what you've done is clarify what makes sense.

Alves: What does it look like when the county mails notices? Does it come in a regular white envelope? I ask because I've heard of a lot of people who said they did not receive anything even though we know it has been sent. My sense is that they are missing it or throwing it away.

Mindy: We send them in a white envelope with our county logo and address.

Spogen: Yes, it does come in a white county envelope. It doesn't look like anything terrible important or official, but it does say "Lewis County Community Development."

Alves: Is there anything that could be done or will it always continue to be done the same way?

Mindy: It will probably continue the same way because we send a lot of these notices and put a lot of paperwork into it. We sent hundreds for this year's stuff. We notice by mailing for site specific applications like rezones and UGAs, publish the notice of application and notice of SEPA determination in the Chronicle and we post it on the webpage and at the site. We also have a Planning Commission email list which anybody can sign up for. We try to hit a lot of different mechanisms where people might find their information, but it does require people to either open their mail, open the newspaper, or drive by the site.

Alves: I have no doubt that there's a lot of effort being made.

Corbin: Where are you getting the people's names and addresses and information from? Is it from the auditor's office or the assessor's office?

Mindy: Yes, it's the standard assessor data that everybody's using. It's the same thing that you can go online and look up for the property information.

Corbin: So perhaps that's an answer we can give to people who said they did not receive it. We can direct them to let the assessors know what their current mailing record is, if it is incorrect.

Mindy: I understand, we hear it all the time from people that they didn't know something was happening. Short of walking door to door I'm not sure how else we're going to make sure people know. We definitely want people to know that this is their opportunity to talk to Planning Commission and then to talk to the Board of County Commissioners who are making the decision. We are definitely not trying to hide the ball, but it is a challenge when we send out hundreds of these every year.

*Mindy asked if the Planning Commissioners were ready to move to a public hearing. Prior to making a decision, the commission had the following questions/discussion.*

Spogen: In the Public's Interest language says "The public interest will be served by approving the amended and determining whether the public interest will be served. Factors include, but are not limited to the following should be considered; the anticipated effect upon the rate for distribution of population growth, employment, growth development, conversion of land..." Are you with me on what I am looking at? I believe Amber brought this up at one of the recent meetings and allowed us to organize our thoughts in a little better way. Is this state or county language?

Mindy: This is county language that was proposed last year, before my time. I would defer to Eric. Do you remember where our consultant, John, was pulling this language from? I think he was researching other county codes, maybe Whatcom?

Eric: I do not know the answer. I don't even know if I was in attendance the Planning Commission was working on this because I was no longer working with language. I know that in general, the background that motivated the change, if not the precise language, was two things. First, we had previously done site-specific rezone amendments, specifically, the middle resource land opt-in provisions where he and I had to specifically advise the Commission that the code gave them a very small playing field in which they could consider things and many of the commissioners were upset about it. So when we got there they thought that the proper considerations were broader than that, and they were right, they should have been. The idea was to look at ways to get more generalized Growth Management Act concerns into the specific criteria that the Planning Commissioners would be allowed to consider so that rather than having a very narrow code that was close to inconsistent with the GMA, unless you layered on top of it an understanding about Growth Management constraints, and so just have a more simple setup where the code itself has a list of Growth Management Act considerations that you would be allowed to hear testimony on and consider. I certainly think it's possible that the pendulum could have swung into slightly too vague, but it was too constrained before. I think that is where John was coming from.

Amber: This was right around the time that Eric and I were transitioning over an advisement on that, and my recollection of the conversations that John had during the workshops and at the hearing too, was that he did survey quite a few other jurisdictions to get an idea, and I don't know specifically for the decision criteria if there was a particular county that he looked at, but I do know that what Eric's talking about is absolutely the case. We were trying to find some type of criteria. However, it's also open-ended criteria because you can also add beyond those and they're just suggested ways to make findings and I think it was just an attempt to try to find good boxes where there's more discretionary decision making being made other than a pro form of box checking. John did survey other counties and jurisdictions, even other states, to get a clearer idea of what folks are doing in that kind of decision criteria.

Spogen: If we have some room for movement in it, if it's not a state law, I wonder if we should have clarifications.

Mindy: These are related to the GMA rules so we when I do findings, I have to do them against all the GMA rules. You do need to consider certain things; impact on population growth, impact on infrastructure, public services, etc. All those things come from the state rules so they're helping to guide you. We did create that very open-ended public interest approval criteria to make a space for you to consider whatever comes up that relates to the public interest. It is very broad, as you experienced in the past year.

Spogen: I think this part that came up when Amber brought it up recently did help to provide a little more clarify. When looking at the approval criteria Gretchen asked for clarification on a few things like, who is the public we are trying to consider? I think this does help clarify that, but it seems that the Public Interest piece is the one we always have a problem on so it there anything we could do any differently or do we just work through it?

Mindy: This is a challenging one. I could certainly think about whether there is a better way to do it.

Spogen: Are we supposed to ask, for instance, the anticipated effect upon the rate of distribution of population growth? Are we supposed to ask staff what you think the effect will be on the rate of distribution in population?

Mindy: In the staff reports I did a finding against all of these. I already said in each report that based on the information provided in the record to date, which usually means we haven't heard testimony yet so something new could be brought forward, whether or not something would impact population or jobs or schools. We provide that analysis.

Spogen: Do you anticipate going forward when we are faced with one of these decisions that you're going to look over these criteria and help answer those questions prior to us considering them?

Mindy: I am always going to provide you with our staff finding on each of these criteria and I'm always going to provide you staff findings against the Growth Management Act, Comprehensive Plan, and our Countywide Planning Policies. I will not tell you what public interest is because that is subjective. I think it's actually important that it's subjective because different cases have different circumstances that we need to consider in terms of public interest. I think it is right that Gretchen and yourself and Bob brought it up - what do you consider the public in these conversations. That's certainly something that during your discussion and deliberation you can talk about and you should talk about. It's very reasonable to ask each other what you are considering when you are considering public interest. A caution before we continue the conversation, we cannot rehash any of the quasi-judicial topics we have decided on because the record is closed, so please refrain from bringing up anything specific about any of the cases.

Fritsch: I was ready to vote no on something previously and when Amber clarified this approval criteria it made me feel like I couldn't vote no because all these approval criteria had been met. Somewhere I was reading that it says "...factors including, but not limited to the following..." I certainly did feel limited like I have to vote yes because it's right there in black and white even though I did not want to. So it's good to know and hear you talk about, Mindy, that we may have different opinions on the public's interest.

Russell: I would echo much of what Gretchen said, but I want to go back to this putting guard rails up and further defining how we think about something. I like the broad breadth. I think the conflict that Gretchen brings up about the broad brush and that it may be hard, but it is one that I'd rather have than somebody telling me not to consider something. I like that we wrestle with it.

Mindy: This is something that we want to cover in a training. I had mentioned at one of our previous meetings that Amber and I have been talking about doing a training with you on October 25<sup>th</sup>. One of the topics I want to talk about is, what is public interest? What does it mean to everybody? What are the different ways to consider it? We can have this discussion without talking about the specifics of any of the cases we've looked at. I have examples from my previous job where commissions and city councils have really struggled with public interest and I can share with you. So we can look at case studies that have nothing to do with Lewis County.

Spogen: I'm sure we all look forward to that. I want to reiterate what Gretchen said. I've underlined it as well, but the "but not limited to" because for me that pretty much just opens the whole thing up to pretty much anything we want to talk about, which is how I would prefer it to be because otherwise, you guys can just do this as county.

Mindy: That's right. These should not be rubber stamped. These are a really big deal and they have impact that go far beyond the property itself. It is important that we have a big, robust conversation.

Corbin: I am on track with everyone else there too. We have, of the four criteria, three that are cut and dry. Then Lorie said that she agrees with that. Bob mention something about guardrails. Guardrails are good, but I don't think they need to be written in stone in a process like this. I think having one criteria that gives us heartburn is good because it really forces us to think and to consider all options and to consider different aspects of benefiting the community. Are we talking about as a whole, 50% plus one, 90/10, etc.? I think that's where we need to keep some discretion and that we are forced to talk it through and consider all avenues, all options, all criteria. This is the one place where we actually can make a real decision and I would hate to give it up. So I'm in favor of keeping the language as it is but perhaps in a training session we could consider these criteria again that Amber brought up and maybe work through some exercises to give us the ability to use those additional tools, but not to write them in stone. I'm all for having tools in our arsenal, but I'm not necessarily in favor of being forced into one file in a filing cabinet.

Amber: This public interest portion and the idea of why it was intended and put in here was the idea, like Eric was stating in particular with like the surface mine, things that there are a lot of actions or things that could go through planning wise or just bureaucratic decision making that if it follows the checkmarks that these are things that



can happen, the decision criteria for public interest is the question of, should it happen, is what you're looking at, and you can weigh in and look at different metrics. The 4 that I that are proposed, that are in our current code that you can consider, are things about, is it possible for this thing to happen? Sure. Is this what an individual landowner or certain parcels want? Sure, but is this generally what the entire community wants or if there's community outcry for this thing. It's an opportunity for the community to have some say in what otherwise is private land interest because communities matter. There'll be more on this again. I think it's fantastic that you do take that portion of the decision criteria seriously and that you are grappling with it. We'll hopefully next month give you a clear solace or direction about how you can think about those things without us making any kind of final action or deliberation on how the whole collective group will go, but to help answer questions or what your thoughts are on that. It's great that this is something that you do take seriously and consider and look forward to helping you take better solace or comfort or control on how you feel in your decision making.

Mindy: As I said, in your staff report you're going to see findings on all these criteria, but I will never doing a finding on "should this happen" because that is not the staff's job. You will hear from me if the proposal can happen legally or not. I will tell you if it meets Growth Management Act rules. I will tell you what things should be considered. Then it is up to the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners to grapple with the questions of should it happen.

Spogen: I wish we could educate the public some way so they knew that if they discussed the criteria it would be very effective. I don't know how you do that because when they come in I feel their frustration. They come in and say what is on their mind because they are passionate about their farm and their family and whatnot, but it isn't answering any of our questions that allow us to make a decision.

Mindy: Yeah, it's hard. Where I came from we had an official neighborhood associations throughout the whole city and staff would give presentations to neighborhood associations that were going to be impacted by things. We called it the ABCs of land use. We went through training to help the public understand how to be effective when communicating with Planning Commission and City Council. Lewis County doesn't really have those kind of organizations, which makes it very hard to think about how we get to the public and help them understand the best ways to be effective with the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. You are right, what they should be doing is saying whether they object or agree and what their points are. Their points should relate directly to the approval criteria and they should define what they think public interest is. We can think about other ways that we can help educate the public about being more effective with you.

Corbin: That is why I ask for the approval criteria to be put on the screen when the public is participating. I've said several times that the criteria is what the public needs to

address. So I have tried to steer the public's focus on the criteria and to tell us where staff may have been wrong, why we legally can't do it. Sometimes there are honest mistakes and things do happen or get missed. Criteria number 3 is more subjective, give us more than just "I caught my first fish behind the house and I don't want it to be torn down." These sentimental or emotional tugging of the heart we can all relate to, but that's not necessarily changing the facts as they stand in regards to the law that we have to follow.

Mindy: You guys have a hard job and you do it voluntarily in the evenings after your regular 9-5 so thank you. I appreciate it.

*After discussion, the Commissioners reached a consensus that they are ready to move to public hearing on October 11, 2022. Staff will be sending an updated staff report due to some small clerical fixes.*

## **B. Housing Update**

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner for Lewis County Community Development and Eric Eisenberg, Housing & Infrastructure Specialist for Lewis County gave a presentation on housing in Lewis County. *See presentation for details.*

*The following discussion occurred throughout the presentation.*

Fritsch: Looking at Eric's example of triplex on 5 acres (*slide 11*) and you're examples (*slide 13*), are these already allowed in the Lewis County Code?

Mindy: In Lewis County code you can do duplexes across the board. In the RDD zones you need double the land to do a duplex. So if you are in RDD5, you actually need a 10 acre lot to do a duplex. In the LAMIRDs you can do duplexes as long as you can still support it with septic and well, so the amount of development may be limited based on the size of the lot. As Eric was pointing out in LAMIRDs you have different circumstances. If you are in a LAMIRD that has water, like Packwood has water in the downtown LAMIRD, you only need to consider septic when looking at your size limits since you don't have to put well and septic on the same site. Duplexes are pretty much allowed across the board, as are Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). If you have a primary house you can also put a secondary structure on your lot. Triplexes or tiny home villages may be problematic unless you're doing workforce housing.

Eric: One of the primary reasons for doing this research and writing this report is that our land use code in both LAMIRDs and the RDD land is motivated by a very conventional way of thinking under the Growth Management Act that you simply can't do these things outside of an Urban area without anybody having really explored what is possible on modern well and septic regulations, and with our existing rural services in part, because those ideas about land use came from the 90s when the picture on well and subject was

quite different. People used more water than they do now. Most appliances now are high efficiency and in general there's real data to show that people use less water, and those things have been codified in different well and septic regulations, but they haven't been codified or well received or understood in the land use regulations that were built on those original things. This is designed to create an actual database or factual report to explain why under modern regulations, environmental protection and stuff like that could be well served - even completely handled for more units. That would be the data on which you could decide what your options would be to change land use rules.

Spogen: The materials speak about Urban Growth Areas in unincorporated cities. What would be an example of that?

Mindy: You can do Urban Growth Areas where you do not have a city. Packwood is not a city, it is unincorporated. It is okay to apply an Urban Growth Area to a portion of what people would consider Packwood. Onalaska has an UGA and it is not a city. There are lots of examples across the state. When you do that, you still need to be able to show that the Urban Growth Area is tied to population growth and that it can be served. Typically, you don't see a whole bunch of these because counties aren't in the business of serving Urban Growth Areas. They are in the business of serving rural areas. Packwood is a unique space so we will be considering that.

Corbin: As the Growth Management Act stands now we cannot have any of our current language decide to organize and incorporated and become a city, is that correct? So Packwood couldn't become a city even if they wanted to?

Mindy: It could become a city, but there are some things that have to happen. First, they have to have an Urban Growth Area and proof of being able to serve it. Second, they have to have a population of 1,500 people, as determined by the census - people living full time within that jurisdiction. After these two big things. Then there are a bunch of decisions about whether the community actually wants to incorporate because it does require standing up your own governance and taxing yourself.

Corbin: I just wondered if that was on the horizon or if any of our local areas are at a population of 1,500 or more

Mindy: I don't think we have any unincorporated areas of 1,500 or more.

Eric: We don't, but Onalaska is the one that would be most likely for that to happen. They're in an existing Urban Growth Area already. They have had some large subdivisions go in. It wouldn't take too many more for them to potentially be getting into that area. It's much more likely in many ways that they would reach the threshold instead of Packwood because they do not have as many part-time residents. All the residents they get are generally full-time residents who would count towards the 1,500 population.

Mindy: They're next step, if there was enough interest in doing that would be to do an incorporation study to figure out what it would cost for them to become their own city. There's a formula that you go through to do an incorporation study to figure out if it is something they can afford to do. It's not cheap to become a city, although it gives you more autonomy. There are pros and cons.

Corbin: Who does the incorporation study? Is it the county or the folks involved?

Eric: It could be either. It's frequently the case there's some sort of group of citizens that are formed that are called the Friends of Onalaska or the People for the Formation of the City of Onalaska, or something similar. They gather money and pay for a study because they are promoting the idea.

Mindy: There's a lot happening on our end related to housing, but nothing on the dial of housing moves quickly. We don't adopt a housing initiative and then a work plan and then a year later all this housing pops up. It's going to take 5-10 years before we will move the dial at all on affordable housing, and it takes an incredible amount of work to move the dial. So the point I want to make and the reason we brought this to you, is so that you guys can see where your work fits into it because it's a really important component of the full strategy. A lot of the stuff we do is very long-term. We hope that over 5, 10, 15 years we will move the dial and we'll make it so that our county is much more affordable.

Russell: When you started out spending so much time on rural I was trying to bite my tongue and not jump in, but then you transition to the urban component. That's where I was really thinking that we needed to spend some time and need some guidance. For instance, you were talking about dormitories and I thought that was really cool, but Chehalis passed an ordinance saying you can't have something like that. I applaud your efforts and thank you for all the work you are doing.

Corbin: Is there some low hanging fruit that can help satisfy some immediate need while we're working on this longer term option? I know there's vacant lots in the cities of Chehalis and Centralia. They certainly have a lot more flexibility than we do in putting up multi-family housing and I know the runs project sounds really good in which you know it's all mixed use. I think that's great. I've seen it successfully deployed in other cities. Are there not options that could be shorter term low-hanging fruit in some of our cities?

Eric: There definitely could be lower hanging fruit in cities. That's why I wanted to try to get them thinking about missing middle housing. I would say the challenge for counties is the land use arena – you have a very limited playing field of things you're allowed to do. The challenge for cities is different. It is more practical and operational. The challenge for cities is, we are totally allowed to do as much density as we can, but how are we going to make sure we have enough water and sewer capacity in those areas? How are we going to make sure there's enough space for cars? How are we going to make sure we have enough staff to be able to talk to the people in our city about this to see if they

agree that we should increase the density in these areas and then implement regulation that we are going to do it responsibly so we end up with what we want? Depending on the cities we are talking about, those problems are at different levels. So Chehalis is in pretty good shape on water and sewer, but they're in pretty bad shape on staff because they have growth happening already and they have limited staff, and they are at capacity. They need more time and more people. That's a different problem than Morton where they don't have utilities out where they wish they had them, and they need to get them out there. So there is low hanging fruit in the cities, but all those things you think would be easy because they're low hanging fruit on the land use side, are difficult in other ways and require a lot of solving. It's really expensive to build right now so having something that's attractive enough that someone's going to come do it is not the easiest thing right now.

Spogen: Plus the raising interest rate or mortgage rate must be making it so that people won't be able to afford as much as they could have afforded before on their monthly income. So your numbers must be changing dramatically.

Eric: That's true in more than one respect. It's true for regular homeowners and true for the types of loans that developers or cities could get to do infrastructure. So interest rates, they get hard. The only silver lining on that is that if interest rates cause some of the demand to cool a little bit on the housing market that might make it easier for the units to not just keep going up and up because of demand. You can work on supply, but if you have a never ending supply of demand, it doesn't actually make the price come down.

Mindy: Yeah, the pendulum swings, and we've watched it swing in many jurisdictions over time when it comes to mortgage rates and it usually does create cooling off, which allows for catchup. The estimate in Washington State is that as a whole, Washington is short 50,000 housing units. It is a humongous deficit to overcome across the state. Most of that clearly will be more within the King County and Spokane County area and the really big jurisdictions. However, every city has an important role to play in that. So I want to echo what Eric was saying that it is important for cities to be able to make headway. There's no way to make headway if the demand is constantly increasing you're in a never-ending catchup, so it would be good to see demand cool off a little bit so that we can try to bolster supply and try to shift this. We are at a huge disparity in terms of what we need and what we have.

Eric: I want to add one more thing in regard to Frank's question about low hanging fruit. Some things that would help are not palatable to the general public unless you try to get the word out. So that's part of the pitch for missing middle housing is that when people think of increased housing is that when people think of increased density, they're thinking about apartment buildings going up next door. They generally aren't thinking about whether it would really be that different if that house next door to me that's X

number of square feet was actually two units instead of one. I don't think people are thinking about the possibility of smaller units taking up the same space as the bigger units they're used to. So that's what you are trying to change – the conversation in the city, starting with their governments, and then eventually with the citizens of the city.

Mindy: If you want to see the controversy about that, Spokane passed regulations last month that basically remove single family residential zoning. Spokane City made a huge move that was really big and bold - something that the state's been trying to do with legislation for a few years and has been failing at it. So we are watching them now to see how that goes for them.

Spogen: Are wages rising in Lewis County? Are the industry that we're bringing in at the ports and all those pushing up the wage with the distribution center and whatnot?

Eric: I did not actually get wage letters from some of these new employees that are current. We got wage letters when they were first coming, which was some years ago, which is too bad. It is the case that part of the reason that we are looking at this development in Centralia that was workforce housing, that was income levels above some of the traditional affordable housing income levels, is that it's true that the wages that those get especially if you factor in the overtime they tend to get, they were pushing them into this income level that was higher than 80% of the Area Medium Incomes (AMI). So those did seem like they jobs that were producing income levels that were above average so that's nice.

Spogen: That's good because I think to some extent single family housing was getting pushed up by people coming in from out of the area that had higher wages.

Mindy: I think the base problem that we have is that we have a massive amount of demand and very low supply and we are not producing the middle types of housing that Eric's talking about. We're producing single family and apartments. There's a huge spectrum in the middle that needs to be developed and we need a lot of it – in the state we need 50,000 of that to be developed. A huge amount of supply needs to be created that's somewhere in that spectrum and the vast majority of it needs to go into the cities, not into the county. However, we keep saying that we don't want to leave ourselves out of that. We have a role to play, it's just that our impact is very small. That's where this coordination becomes so great. All the jurisdictions I talk to outside of Centralia and Chehalis don't have anybody with expertise in land use or housing. They don't have a base level of understanding in how to write code. It's really challenging when you have these jurisdictions. It's not their fault – they just have a clerk and a volunteer major.

Eric: If you want to think about what kind of price benefits there are to doing smaller units, I did a small study where I looked at the type of price increase that you saw for many 2012-2022 for housing in Centralia, Mossyrock, Curtis, and Packwood. It was 18-% increase in Centralia over 10 years, but it was more than that in Mossyrock, more in

Curtis, and 330% more in Packwood. That means the price of the house is 4 times more. The further we get from urban areas, the more the prices are going up, and the faster the prices are going up. My hypothesis, although hard to prove with the current resources, is that in the urban areas there are places where you can get smaller units, and this a temper on the prices, because, instead of buying a larger house or not buying one at all you can pick a smaller option and it makes the price pressure go down. That's my theory on it. I hope to prove it in a report somehow.

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

### **A. Staff**

Mindy: We sent out a transmittal letter to the Planning Commissioners that includes all seven of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposals. There was a cover memo and a staff report for each proposal. I wanted to get some reaction to that and see what you think. We need to wrap it up and get it ready for signature.

*The commissioners shared feedback, but did not have any proposed changes to the draft letter.*

Mindy: I will consider the draft complete and will have Chair Spogen and Vice Chair Russell sign it.

### **B. Planning Commissioners**

Russell:

- I went to the Lewis County Planning Commission website. I was really pleased with all the information available. Well done to those working on the website.
- Also I have had some opportunities to evaluate some projects recently and I wanted to pass along that critical areas are watched closely by the county and the general public needs to feel really good about the fact that the county has good tools to look at this stuff. One of the sites I was on was a 5 acre parcel that had wetlands, therefore they needed to mitigate. They had to go across a fish passage. They did that. It was really cool. We're in Lewis County and get a bad rap sometimes, but the critical area stuff and the feedback on my project this week was really good.
- I was in a meeting yesterday of the Chehalis Basin lead entity - the habitat work group. It's this other hat I wear about salmon. I am a representative for the Lewis County Conservation District. It was really encouraging yesterday when Bob Amerine told us that Lee Napier, Community Development's Director, was the one that started this thing. You can't imagine how much good work they do. Our basin is a model for the entire west coast of the State of Washington. I wanted to put a plug in for Lee.
- Last week I got to Public Access television and I flipped the channel and there was a women solicitor from Lewis County. Amber Smith was speaking to the Washington Supreme Court and arguing a case. The judicial jousting that was going on - you would

have been so proud of her! I wanted to say wow, we've got great guidance. We're dealing with critical areas from people that started this whole thing and good attorneys. Eric, you left us with a good one and Amber, you did a great job.

## **8. Calendar**

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on October 11, 2022 and the agenda items are a public hearing on amendment to LCC 17.12 Public Participation Program and a workshop on the Packwood Subarea Plan, as well as an update on transportation planning. The September 27, 2022 meeting is cancelled.

Additionally, both Planning Commission meetings in November will be cancelled.

## **9. Adjourn**

Commissioner Chatian made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.