

**Mason County
Planning Advisory Commission & BOCC Joint Meeting
September 27, 2017**

(This document is not meant to be a verbatim transcript)

Call to Order

Commissioner Shuttly called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Commissioner Shuttly, Commissioner Neatherlin, Commissioner Drexler, Marilyn Vogler, Deb Soper, Vicki Wilson, Aaron Cleveland, James Thomas, and Jason Bailey

Agenda Changes- Commissioner Shuttly asked if there were any changes to the agenda. No changes made.

Welcome by Board of County Commissioners – Commissioner Shuttly mentioned his appreciation to meet with the Planning Advisory Commission and staff for the second time this year regarding the subject of the Mason County Comprehensive Plan. Commissioners Drexler and Neatherlin also extended their welcome.

Other Business – Paula reminded everyone that on October 19, 2017 Mason County will be hosting a region wide planner’s forum to talk about water and stormwater. This is the Department of Commerce’s quarterly forum hosted by Mason County, it will be located at the Squaxin Community Kitchen; starting time is 9am.

Public Comment Period – None

Briefing & Worksession – Planning Commission overview of updates and discussion of Mason County’s 2016-2036 Comprehensive Plan, as well as Discussion, Guidance, and Direction

Presenters: Planning Advisory Members

Commissioner Shuttly turned the meeting over to Chair James Thomas.

James extended thanks to the Commissioners for the recognition that community planning advisory groups received at the Board of County Commissioners’ Meeting on Tuesday September 26, 2017. He talked about the long process that the Comprehensive Plan had been and that many members that were on the commission during the process were no longer and that they wished to recognize the following: Tim Duffy, Bill Dewey, and Robert Drexler, as well as the planning staff. James also mentioned the contributions of Barbara Adkins, Dave Windom, Joel Meyer from PUD 3, and Planning Manager Paula Reeves.

He talked about the Comprehensive Plan as a work in progress, an improvement over the last iteration, but revisions will need to be made. He talked about the public comment they received, that he personally read every one, he said if he was to summarize the public input into one characterization it would be “the people of Mason seem to want Mayberry R.F.D with a SWAT

Team, a Costco, and a Honda plant”. He said that this showed the conflict within the County, the desire to preserve the rural character but the need to have good jobs and places to spend enjoyable leisure time. He said that the Comp Plan will never be perfect. “The Comp Plan reflects the aspirations of the community and those are always going to change.” The Comprehensive Plan will have to change with those aspirations.

Vicki Wilson began a broad overview of how the Comprehensive Plan worked.

Vicki brought a slide up on the tv screen. She discussed GMA legislative intent regarding the Comprehensive Plan, GMA structural components, population forecasts and trends that support the Development of the Land Use Element which in turn are the basis for all other elements. These Elements are built on public expectations and participation, as well as Countywide Planning Policies. Using the above components a framework was created by the PAC to allow for prioritization of efforts. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan had a lot of good things, but it was not user friendly. The PAC cleaned up the policies, a matrix was created showing which policies were cleaned up or taken out due to being codified or located in another County adopted plan. Vicki mentioned that regulations and policies go hand in hand, if something doesn’t match up then they need to be evaluated for appropriateness.

She talked about the Citizen Guide addition to the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 1, as an introduction to the overall plan and how this guide helped readers understand the purpose of the plan and how the parts worked together. Vicki added that Paula also added an online survey to get further public opinion, as well as coffee talks for interested groups to request.

She mentioned that the 2005 Comprehensive Plan did not have a separate Rural Element, while this 2016-2036 plan does; it makes sense to have a separate chapter dedicated to rural since the public’s vision of the County is primarily “rural”.

Jason talked about population, handed out a one page document to the Commissioners and the PAC members. He mentioned that he was previously a Pierce County resident and personally saw how overwhelmed their infrastructure was becoming with the migration of people from King County.

He showed slides depicting the population change in Mason County from 2006-2016 and the drastic drop due to the recession. The population pyramid, showing how the population was made up regarding sex and age. The majority of the County is in the 50-74 age range which exceeds the working force age which is typically the 20-50 year range.

Next he showed the State of Washington projections for population growth in Mason County, the mid-range projections show a population of 83,800. This range was found to allow the County to grow but not over extend its resources trying to meet the high projection needs. An additional slide showed the allocations of the projected population in the UGAs and rural area. The last slide concentrated on the employed population and where they commuted to. Jason stated that if the County doesn’t have more and better jobs, people will continue to commute and maybe eventually move to other communities.

Commissioner Drexler asked about the population distributions and why the Belfair/Allyn area was low in regards to actual numbers moving in. She asked if it was required to use previous data for the projection of growth in the County.

Dave mentioned that the number allocations had to match up with what the City of Shelton projected but the numbers for Belfair and Allyn do not take into account projects that are on the horizon with Green Diamond. He mentioned that data was based on history and as planners we know that things could happen to change those numbers, one reason the Capital Facilities Plan short term plan comes in handy.

Paula spoke up and said that the Office of Financial Management takes Census data as a starting point for figuring out these population projections, and then modifies according to trends that it has seen in and around the County. The Census is about to be updated and that may change the numbers seen in low, mid, and high range population projections. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan can be updated yearly.

Vicki mentioned adding a sentence or paragraph, outside the table, that elaborates on the Belfair and Allyn projections having the possibility of being higher. James mentioned that notes outside the actual projections won't affect the Comprehensive Plan. Jason asked when staff received the new numbers based on the 2020 Census, Paula answered that she believed it was April. Marilyn asked what this distribution of the population projections does in regard to the Capital Facilities Plan, Dave answered that it was the driving force behind the plan, solid waste planning, transportation, water systems, etc., are driven by these projections.

James was concerned that changing the population projections would greatly interfere with the rest of the Comp Plan and with little time left to complete this plan he did not see this work as a possibility. Vicki was more concerned about adding a statement or footnote concerning a margin of error. Commissioner Neatherlin stated that the benefit of having that statement would be to allow the next group, looking at the Comp Plan, to have that information. James had no problem with it being a narrative piece.

Marilyn began her presentation on the Housing Element. She stated that housing was a big issue for the County, but the GMA really emphasizes Affordable Housing in its approach to what the Comprehensive Plan was supposed to be reflecting. She noted that the market takes care of the people who can afford housing in the average or higher, but affordable housing has been a problem in the County for decades. She mentioned that almost half of the code violations in the County are related to RVs; people are living in them because these are what many people can afford. She talked about cost burdened renters, renters that pay 30% or more in their income on rent or rent related utilities, garbage, water, etc. She mentioned the significant changes made to the Housing Element, as well as the changes by the Department of Commerce on who was considered "homeless". She called out some of the Housing Policies related to affordable housing and her ideas of what those housing possibilities might look like. She talked about the 26% of housing that was seasonally occupied, the possibility of projects in the County creating more seasonal housing, and the idea of temporality encompassing the community.

Commissioner Drexler mentioned a scrivener's error on page 25 of 30 in the Housing Chapter, the housing element does not have a 4.8 policy. Marilyn mentioned that it was in the Planning Policies, that there were three policies that needed to be moved into the Housing Element as well. Paula will add those into the Housing Element. Commissioner Neatherlin mentioned that during his time as a meter reader the number of seasonal housing units in the County was even higher, it was closer to 40%, and much of the North and South Shore in the Belfair area were seasonally occupied.

Commissioner Neatherlin added that one of the biggest encumbrances to creating multi-family housing or tiny home establishments was zoning that only allows for one residence per 5 acres or 10 acres. Also, in the UGA each tiny home would incur, currently, the cost of hooking up to the sewer.

Commissioner Drexler stated that she hoped the update to the Comp Plan in 2018 might include a dedication in the policies to innovative housing technologies, such as tiny home configurations. Also, she talked about the non-conforming status of many HOA type communities that have overlay zoning of one house per five acres even though they all are built very dense. She noted that with the changes made within the GMA, 1 per 5 acres was now not a realistic approach and challenged in court; she would like recognition that the County has dense communities that are now conforming.

Marilyn mentioned the Affordable Housing Incentive program, passed in 2006, which was about lot size, densities, fee reductions, and expedited permits. If this program was included in the Comprehensive Plan than they could have a defensible reason for including density in some of Mason County's rural areas. Commissioner Neatherlin noted that he didn't know how defensible it would make it, but he knew that to do that type of work it had to be included in the Comp Plan.

Aaron began his presentation on Transportation and Utilities. He mentioned that the Transportation plan had already been adopted. His slides depicted how many roads, bridges, bus routes, airport, and ports the County had. The County was doing very well regarding level of service standards for roads; maintenance and preservation were always being worked on. He talked about the great amount of green fuel supplying the County, 96% carbon neutral status. Cellular coverage was steadily getting better throughout the County. PUD 3 was increasing its strides with solar intersection lighting. Telecommunication was served by three different private companies; diversity will lower cost to consumer. He talked briefly about the Capital Facilities Plan, including the improvements to the Eells Hill Transfer Facility, the paving of Arcadia Rd., and a new park done near the sewer plant. In regards to water, the County used a fair amount but the exempt wells only make up about 22% of the County and these are hooked up to septic systems that filter back to the aquifer. There are 1490 wells, counted, with 11,000 connections and 25,000 private septic systems; this information was listed in the Comp Plan. His last slide was concerning maximizing investments in infrastructure. The cost per mile for new infrastructure was about 22 million; the best option was always to preserve and upkeep. He mentioned that designing for a specific corridor's characteristics, rather than taking the cookie cutter road engineering approach, can save a lot of money.

James talked about the Economic Development Element work done by the consulting firm Community Attributes Inc., the most recent product focused on five primary areas, infrastructure, capital improvements, education and business development, community development and quality of life, and key industries in Mason County. He outlined some of the infrastructure the County already had, what they could expand upon, and what they wished for within the County. He stated that we have the infrastructure in the County but we need the facilities to house new businesses in the community. He talked about the need for building more accommodations for visitors to the area and the costs that go with it.

In wrapping up the presentation, James talked about the plan being a metaphor for the community; a successful community will have a valued place for each of the elements making up the Comprehensive Plan and that it was their job as Planning Advisory Commissioners to carefully put these pieces together. James then opened the meeting for questions and comments.

Commissioner Drexler noted that the Vision Statement for the Comprehensive Plan may need to be reworked in the future to reflect the changing state of the County, as not completely rural. Marilyn mentioned that the current Vision Statement was drafted through a complex public process and that the PAC had already started discussions on what they needed to focus on in the next annual Comprehensive Plan update, but this statement might be something they want to start the new year with in revisions.

Commissioner Drexler also talked land distributions and identifying how much land was not taxable, and how does the County build its tax base in other ways.

Commissioner Neatherlin stated that he wanted to leave the group with one last important point and that was to be conscious of separating personal desires and what the law says the committee must do. He thanked the PAC for all the hard work that they dedicated to the Comp Plan.

Marilyn and Paula mentioned using the rest of the time to talk about concerns going forward and how the plan will be able to move through to the submittal process.

Commissioner Drexler and Commissioner Neatherlin talked about revisions they might have and how they would present them to the Planning Advisory Commission. Commissioner Shutty asked Paula about the timeline for the Comp Plan. Paula noted there was an additional PAC meeting on October 9th, to precede the regular meeting on October 16th; she can take comments during this time frame. She mentioned the first opportunity to have a public hearing with the BOCC would be October 24th. Commissioner Shutty talked about discussing the Comp Plan Update subject at a Monday briefing and then transmitting comments to Paula for review, prior to the first hearing. Paula added that the first public hearing could be postponed until November 13th.

Deb Soper asked why the Comprehensive Plan had to be approved by the end of this year. Dave responded by saying that the plan was already a year and half past scheduled completion, he noted that if the Capital budget moves forward then we would be missing out on grant opportunities by failing to submit the Comprehensive Plan to the Department of Commerce. Jason added that they will have another opportunity with the yearly update, to take comments and revise certain aspects if needed. Deb was concerned that aspects hadn't received enough

discussion, Commissioner Neatherlin said he would be happy to read Deb's redlines, as well as the other PAC member's. Marilyn reiterated Paula's former comments that if the PAC members had issues, they should compile and submit so they could approach again.

The PAC and the County Commissioners talked about countywide policies and who they apply to.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.