

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

April 23, 2024 - Meeting Notes

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

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Office Assistant Senior; Lee Napier, Director of Community Development;

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – April 9, 2024
- Land Capacity Analysis Methodology
- Staff Report – Land Capacity Analysis

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 as presented. Commissioner Spogen made the motion to approve the agenda; second by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes from April 9, 2024. Commissioner Moore made a motion to approve the notes as presented, second by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

Jami Lund provided public comment on encouraging opportunities for the next generation relating to the Growth Management Act and land use planning.

6. Workshop – Land Capacity Analysis

Mindy Brooks, Senior Long-Range Planner, gave a presentation on Land Capacity Analysis (*see presentation for details*). Throughout the presentation the commissioners asked the following questions.

Commissioner Spogen asked if there will be downzoning. Mindy responded that cities are going to need to start using minimum density requirements. Almost all cities use maximum density requirements. To force the multifamily, they will likely need to put in place minimum density requirements to hit those targets as well. So, we'll probably start to see that in very specific zones for the cities. In Packwood and Onalaska, we will have minimum density requirements. This is the biggest change and is totally new for Washington - it isn't something that has been used except for in the largest cities.

Commissioner Skutley asked about whether the county and cities reflect on what has been done in the past and make changes accordingly. Mindy responded that the analysis that was done for the Housing Allocation was not a trend projection. Each city had the option to use a basic trend projection, but instead they looked at permitting in the pipeline and capacity. Skutley responded that in Winlock, developers have bought property, but it has not yet been used for what it was intended. Mindy replied that through the agreements with the cities, they are putting together their zoning and their planning for the future of their space because they intend to annex that space. Winlock has annexed almost all of their Urban Growth Area (UGA) so when they complete their land capacity analysis it will be primarily just for their city limits. Skutley reiterated his initial question about looking back on what we have created. Mindy responded that is exactly what we are doing with our Land Capacity Analysis. Each city will look at what their capacity is, based on what their city limits and UGAs are now, and we'll be working with them to determine if they want to make amendments around their UGA. Winlock is a different conversation because they don't have UGA left since it has all been annexed into city limits. So, everything's open for a look. Lee added that when UGAs were first established there was not a lot of methodology. Now, there is an expectation that the cities do the land capacity analysis to prove that their proposal encompasses where they can grow and then how they can accommodate that. Skutley responded that there are a lot of angles to this that we need to be aware of. Mindy agreed and said since she has been here there have been a lot of requirements put in place for the cities that were not previously there. Once a UGA has been set, it is expected to be annexed, and once it is annexed it is no longer in our control. Skutley asked if we set the zoning originally. Mindy responded that it is done differently for each city. For some, like Centralia and Chehalis, we adopt the city's zoning once the UGA boundaries are set. For option 2 cities, we adopt their zoning by reference, and we allow their urban uses. Option 1 cities use our zoning in the UGA.

Commissioner Fritsch noted that there is quite a chasm between capacity and actual use. In Packwood, 78% of the homes that are considered housing are not used for residential use. If you were to look at Packwood on paper it would seem that there are plenty of houses to accommodate its residents, but they are actually being used as vacation homes or short term rentals. Mindy responded that Packwood is a unique place that they are still working on the land capacity analysis for since there are a lot of assumptions to work on. The state does not consider the number of dwelling units a sufficient answer. They want to hear if you have enough dwelling units at 30% AMI or you will have enough at 30% AMI, 50% AMI, and 80% AMI. We need to figure out how to make the right arrangements around the fact that that Packwood does have a significant amount of housing supply in short term rental. Fritsch asked for clarification that the work with the land capacity analysis is to appropriately zone areas of Packwood to accommodate the higher density development, which will presumably produce lower income housing. Mindy responded yes, but that we do have to make good assumptions about market factors and do the best we can to try to represent that in the analysis for Packwood and how much population and housing it can accommodate.

Commissioner Russell stated that Packwood is indeed an outlier, so he wouldn't use it as an example. Russell asked how the desire to increase housing in an AMI level is consistent with some of the decisions made about large UGAs. He stated that it seems like if we want developers to build multi-family units where they would have an impact on the AMI, there will need to be constraints on sprawl so there's a reason that people would rent those and invest money to build those buildings. Russell asked how to balance that and if that is that really what Mindy's talking about when discussing UGAs getting too big. Mindy responded that Russell summarized the premise of the Growth Management Act, to make your UGAs tight and control sprawl. The cities need to show what their capacity is now based on the zoning that they're using and then demonstrate how they could accommodate all those housing. They will absolutely have to make changes to their zoning, for example, the minimum density. We're going to need to talk about the really large UGAs in some circumstances that are too big. The conversation needs to be had with the cities because they're the ones who have to plan for that space and annexation and serving it. So, those conversations will be done through the Planned Growth Committee (PGC) first, and then with Planning Commission. The PGC meetings are open to the public on the third Wednesday of the month at 1:00 PM in the BOCC Hearing room.

Commissioner Corbin asked about the concept of Seabrook type development here in Lewis County to encourage the formation of another city and to think creatively out-of-the-box. Lee responded that Seabrook is a community out on the coast in Grays Harbor and it is a community that was planned, not like Birchfield in the sense of a planned community, but it was planned through a platting process. The developer did partner with the county. Grays Harbor County had an owned and operated water and sewer system in the area so there was infrastructure in place. The developer put up a million dollars to expand because the sewer system, when it was acquired by Grays Harbor County, was failing. Grays Harbor is not a fully planning GMA County, so they have different rules and regulations that govern them. They also had designated the area as a resort type zoning, so it allowed for smaller lots. Now for example,

you could look at something like that within an existing LAMIRD or within an existing UGA, but you have to have the commitment of onsite municipal water and sewer. Mindy added that one tool that is available is the Master Planned Resort overlay. Although it is available, we have not applied it to any locations in Lewis County. In that way, I think there are opportunities for being creative, however, as Lee said, it most often comes down to infrastructure. I don't want to close doors on creativity, just always being mindful of what it takes in investment to make it happen.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

Lee shared that she is retiring beginning July 1st but will be on leave the month of June so her last day in the office is May 31st. The Planning Commissioners shared accolades and thanks for Lee's work. Mindy shared that she has been offered and accepted the position of director. She will start open recruitment for the long-range planner position once Mindy has made the transition. Mindy will likely be fulfilling job duties for both positions in the interim to maintain progress on the Comprehensive Plan Update. Commissioner Russell shared that watching the growth of Community Development has been remarkable and came because of Lee's perseverance.

B. Planning Commissioners

Russell responded to the public comment made earlier in the meeting, stating that he couldn't agree more with being bold and making recommendations we desire. The caveat is that the Commissioners must make recommendations that are legal and that are for the better good and not for what we want. The most important thing is we only make recommendations, not decisions. Staff have done a nice job of allowing us to say why we disagree with something - the Planning Commission is made up of members who are diverse and respect each other's opinions. I think we'll be as bold as we can be, but what's bold for me may not be bold for somebody else.

Commissioner Corbin shared about his experience living in three different counties prior to living in Lewis County and how from day one in Lewis County, his experience was positive.

Commissioner Skutley shared that there is talk of an equestrian center at the fairgrounds and encouraged the Commissioners to support it.

8. Calendar

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will occur on May 14, 2024, and the agenda item is a public hearing on Private Road Naming.

Commissioner Corbin shared that he will be absent on May 28th and June 11th.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

DRAFT