Meeting called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Chair Havens.

ROLL CALL

Jim Hall, Leal Dickson, Mike Joselyn, Wayne Havens, Val Hillers, Dean Enell, Jeff Wallin


MINUTES

June 25, 2013

Commissioner Joselyn moved to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Hillers seconded, motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

Garrett Newkirk, North Whidbey Island Resident, did not want to state address
Discussed APZ, quality of life, and hardships the military flights are causing the community.

Chair Havens asked the Planning Department to look into the matter and see what can be done about it. Understands that we need the Naval Air Station but also need to consider the impact.

Director Wechner stated the subject was duly noted and will review the issue.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

David Wechner thanked the staff and the Commissioners for their warm welcome. He hopes to make sure Camano is also represented in the decisions made. He discussed his experience working in the public and private sectors; as well as a balanced approach to management.
The Department hopes to respond to public comments on the Shoreline Master Program Update within the timeframe Dept. of Ecology provided. Additional time may be needed, but the goal is a prompt response.

To keep the public informed in the Comp Plan Update effort, the Department website will be used more effectively than in the past and will free up staff time to do their work. Interest groups will be encouraged to use the established venues and times set up, rather than individual meetings in order to be more efficient.

Mr. Wechner further stated he would like to respond to the needs of the Planning Commission, encourages them to contact him to discuss anything they would like to see the Planning staff improve on.

Commissioner Havens stated that staff gets a regular paycheck, he asked that staff to remember that the contractor is waiting to get the permit in hand to be able to start their jobs and be able to care for their families.

The Director responded that there has been a temporary staff reassignment, which rearranged an employee’s duties to include development permits, to be able to move those permits faster.

Senior Planner, Brad Johnson presented two issues for the Planning Commissioner’s consideration:

**New Business – Introductory Discussion**

*Countywide Planning Policies and an overview of upcoming work on revisions to the Policies.*

- An overview of our progress in updating the County Wide Planning Policies

Brad Johnson informed the Commission that staff is working actively with the other jurisdictions on drafting updates to the Countywide Planning Policies. The updates are necessary in order to incorporate the revised Population Projection update and to provide some clarity on how the jurisdictions work together. All of the jurisdictions are trying to avoid confusion and work in a more cooperative fashion than has been done in the past.

**Old Business - 2016 Periodic Review – Population Projection**

- A recommended population projection for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Review and Update

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties and cities to periodically review and update their comprehensive plans and development regulations. As part of this process, Island
County is required to assess our past population projections to ensure that they are still accurate, and to ensure that our Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) are appropriately sized.

In order to address these requirements, Planning and Community Development has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Island County’s economic conditions, past growth trends, and demographic characteristics, as well as data from the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the US Census Bureau.

Based on our research, Planning and Community Development has determined that in the year 2036 Island County will likely have a population of 87,917. The 2010 census count determined that the population of Island County was 78,506 in that year; as such, our recommended population projection represents an increase of 9,411 over a 26 year period. (A detailed issue paper outlining the specific findings and methods was provided at the June 25th meeting and the July 23rd meeting).

The Department respectfully requests that the Planning Commission formally recommend that the Board of Island County Commissioners adopt the population projection outlined above. Findings of Fact were prepared for the Planning Commission’s consideration, to move forward with a recommendation.

Commissioner Havens wanted to discuss the water supply and why the aquifers were not being addressed in the Population Projection. It is very difficult to project how long the supply will last in the population projection.

Brad answered that the Population Projection Process is really designed to gage how many people would conceivably decide to move to Island County. This is something that is accomplished through the different elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The current Comprehensive Plan contains a Water Resources Element. There have been preliminary discussions with the Health Department and they have a Hydrologist on staff now, which is different from the last time this process was done.

People are much more conscientious about limited water resources and how those resources are allocated. As we move forward with those elements of the Comprehensive Plan, whether it is in a rural, growth, or water element we will be doing a lot more research and work with the Health Department and will bring that information to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Enell discussed that the Growth Management Plan’s primary goal, to encourage settlement of the assumed percentage of the population into urban growth areas since it would much less expensive and feasible for the County to provide services for the people. A very crucial figure that becomes involved is the percentage of people that are moving and settling in the rural areas, in the cities, and in the single NMUGA in Freeland.

We now have historical data of how we have done since 1998 in that distribution of people. The goal of the concept is to accomplish urban density so that transportation systems, fire protection, police protection and county services work, keeping an eye on the bottom line to achieve those
numbers. Perhaps the Department should consider some sort of incentives to make those a reality.

Commissioner Hillers stated that it would be difficult to achieve on Camano Island.

Commissioner Enell stated there are RAID’s on Camano Island to achieve that purpose.

Will Simpson addressed that based on the scope of work and the Public Participation Plan will be doing a more careful analysis in the upcoming months looking at that specific information and the allocation to each planning area. In the next couple of months a more detailed presentation with that analysis will be given.

Further discussion continued on the process of the number gathering process for the Population Projection.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steve Erickson, Box 53, Langley
Feels the Planning Department has done a good job on the projections.
Discussed:
- The wild life impacts.
- Greenbelt delineation (Oak Harbor, Greenbank, and Freeland) to allow wild life habitat movement.
- GMA provides rural definition, which includes fish & wildlife as habitat.
- GMA Case in Whatcom County; the issue had to do with water availability and dewatering of streams. Water needs to be part of the plan explicitly.

Garret Newkirk, North Whidbey Island
Discussed:
- The census data information does not provide distinction between North, Central, South Whidbey and Camano Island.
- Only growth shown is on the Navy base.
- Limitations of growth on the Federal Reservations.

Commissioner Hillers asked for clarification of the projected population growth numbers for the Navy base.

Mr. Newkirk continued to discuss the population numbers for the Navy Base and the complications.

Pam Neshke, Honeymoon Bay, Freeland
Representing Citizens Advisory Group for Freeland Water & Sewer District
Wanted clarification regarding Commissioner Enell’s comments about incentives, asked if he meant relocating people to urban areas?
Commissioner Enell stated that if the goal is to have fifty percent of the people in urban areas and 50 percent in rural areas and that is not occurring, there needs to be some incentives to move into the urban areas or conversely disincentives for people to move into the rural areas. Most areas in Washington State use growth impact fees.

**John Chaffins**, Freeland
Representing Citizens Advisory Group for Freeland Water Sewer & District
Asked what considerations are being made to look at a small community like Freeland and why.

**Rufus Rose**, 6529 Four Sisters Lane,
Stated it is useful to know why people move to various locations of Island County.

- Reasons why people move to Island County.
  - Regional Differences.
- Who is representing the rural areas?
  - What outreach is being made to the rural areas?
- 5 acre minimum lot size is harmful due to rising cost of living and changes the character of the type of people that can live in the rural areas.
  - Forces lower income households to live in urban areas.
- Deferred tax status.
- Aggregate the availability to develop.
- Coupeville and Langley have expressed interest in not having more development.
- Importance of the Planning Commission to understand their relationship between Island County and the Council of Governments.

**Ron Nelson**, Island County Economic Development Council, 180 NW Cloveland St, Coupeville
One of the things that is really important as we look at population going forward isn’t just the raw numbers it’s how those numbers are made up.

- The importance of the demographics.
- The composition of age groups.
- The importance to businesses being attracted to Island County.

**Jason Joyner**, Coupeville
Commended staff for the work being done. Asked how this process and the figures being used today differs from those used in the past and reassures that mistakes of the past are not repeated. He hopes that the Planning Commission understands that the comments like Mr. Newkirk’s are in the minority. The only people benefiting in having the Navy leave are the banks.

**Steve Erickson**, WEAN Box 53, Langley
Jet flights are rendering parts of Central Whidbey uninhabitable and causing physical damage to their health.

- Navy Environmental Assessment.
- Dependability of revenue being brought in by the Military.
- County needs to recognize that its people are being hurt by the military.
Commissioner Hillers interjected that this is an impassioned argument and people are looking for places to discuss the Navy. The topic is population on Whidbey and it is affected by what happens in the Navy but the Planning Commission has little that they can do about it except for Mr. Newkirk’s request regarding the APZ.

Commissioner Enell commented that the Navy cooperates with Island County in this GMA exercise since they are a partner in it as well.

Commissioner Havens asked that the new item on the agenda be explained.

Brad Johnson explained that the Countywide Planning Policies that the GMA requires be included in the Counties Comprehensive Plan is to guide the cooperation between the different jurisdictions within a county to make sure that there is coordination to prevent overlap or contradictory decisions between jurisdictions. They were adopted in 1998 and the experience since 1998 has shown there is need for more specificities in the policies. The goal is to save time and resources in the future.

Commissioner Hall asked that Brad please answer any of the questions that where brought up during the meeting.

Mr. Johnson stated the first question related to what factors would be used or considered in regional allocations in determining the populations of the cities, the towns and places like Freeland? It is a multi step process. First step is to determine how many people are likely to move to the County as whole, next, where are those people going to live regionally, and the final step is looking at the percentages of people in each urban growth area versus rural areas within those planning areas.

The last step will require the most fine grained analysis, looking at all the details, building permits issued, water/sewer/electrical hook-ups, and school attendance. There are still two steps leading up to that.

He then addressed the question regarding what representation the rural areas have. To this point there has not been a specific outreach effort to members of the public in those areas due to the County’s dual role of being both the regional entity that represents everyone in the county, including everyone that lives in the cities and the towns, as well as the people that live in the rural areas. Moving forward there will be focus on the regions and trying to identify groups that represent people.

Mr. Johnson also addressed the question in regards to economic development. The Department has started working with the Economic Development Council and Mr. Nelson in developing an Economic Development Plan. The Board of Commissioners has expressed a real interest in working on that.
Brad addressed the question regarding how the population forecasting is different this time versus previous efforts. Population forecasting is extremely difficult and is not an exact science. There is less focus on building permit data and past trends. There was an over reliance on trends and projecting them into the future. Just because there is a large population growth does not mean that it will continue to do so and grow indefinitely. Building permit data reliance often is out ahead of demand and over represents population growth since real estate development is speculative in nature.

He further responded to the statements regarding military impacts, and said this item is not being dealt with at the moment. In terms of the obligation under State law, it is to look at population growth on the Island. We are not to look at where the population is coming from or why it’s coming. We are only to prepare for likely population growth and we are planning accordingly. There is a requirement that we address impacts on operations of military installations from population growth and the other way around.

Will Simpson added that they would be meeting with the Council of Government tomorrow. When the Public Participation Plan was drafted they recognized that the Council of Governments did not fully represent each jurisdiction to make some of the planning decisions. It is just a venue for information sharing and allows additional input.

Commissioner Enell asked if there is anything in the Population Forecasting that will influence the Growth Management Act.

Brad Johnson answered that growth is driven in the different regions by different factors and would not influence the Growth Management Act. He further discussed the various examples of incentives, as well as supply and demand of the population growth.

Commissioner Enell asked about infrastructure development to encourage the goal. He asked for an example.

Mr. Johnson stated sewer is one in consideration. The planning efforts for infrastructure has not been coordinated close enough. He further discussed the attempts being made to meet that goal in the future.

Commissioner Enell also commented about the high percentage of commuters in the south end and ferry transportation. Is there a way for Island County to encourage more of a walk on to the ferry?

Brad answered that the Island County Public Works is currently working on updating the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. That is a point that was stressed in the discussion.

Director Dave Wechner stated in response to transportation and the connection with Mukilteo, Public Works is involved with connecting with Mukilteo and some regional transportation efforts that are happening with the ferry terminal, the rail connection, and bus connection. Those efforts
will also be considered in looking at the commuter and development potential in South Whidbey. He further discussed where the caring capacity will occur and how it will help arrive to the some of the projections.

Commissioner Dickson asked when steps two and three will occur in the process.

Mr. Simpson responded that in terms of allocating population growth the preliminary scope of work, it is scheduled for September 1st. That is the target date to reach consensus with the other jurisdictions that will be affected by those numbers. The third step is for the beginning of next year due to the analysis that is required to do that work.

*Commissioner Hillers moved to approve the Findings of Facts, Commissioner Havens seconded, motion carried unanimously.*

The discussion turned to the next meeting, which was identified to be held in August.

Commissioner Hillers asked that the new water facility in Anacortes be researched to see the affects, if any, to Oak Harbor.

*Commissioner Joselyn moved to adjourn, Commissioner Hillers seconded, motion carried unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Shaddy