

ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS - MINUTES OF MEETING

SPECIAL SESSION – JANUARY 26, 1998 WORKSHOP

The Board of Island County Commissioners met in Special Session on January 26, 1998, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in Hearing Room I, Island County Courthouse, Coupeville, WA. The purpose of the special session was to provide an opportunity in joint workshop for the Board to meet with the Planning Director and staff, Island County Planning Commission, and Keith Dearborn, to discuss planning issues and review the schedule for completion of the comprehensive plan. The specific agenda for today's workshop was: Natural Lands.

Attending today's workshop were:

Board of County Commissioners: Wm. L. McDowell, Chairman, Mike Shelton, Member and Tom Shaughnessy, Member.

Planning Commission: Chairman Tom Olsen and Commissioners Rufus Rose, Bill Vincent and Ann Pringle. Commissioners Richard Hart, Jo Ann Silvers, Sheilah Crider and Linda Moore were absent.

Consultants: Keith Dearborn, Bogle and Gates, Gene Duvernoy

Staff: Vince Moore, Director, Planning and Community Development; Donna Keeler, Manager, Comprehensive Planning, Debby Ross, Adm. Asst. – Planning Commission. Larry Kwarsick, Director, Public Works.

Others Present: Approximately eight people were in the audience [Attendance list on file].

NATURAL LANDS

Handouts: Issue Paper on Natural Lands.

Donna Keeler presented an overview of the issue paper which includes the following issues:

1. Does the Island County Comprehensive Plan adequately address the GMA goals and requirements for "open space" and "recreation" ?
2. Are existing programs, such as the Conservation Future's Fund and current use tax programs adequately meeting the need / demand for protecting open space areas and natural lands of importance?
3. Will the County / community benefit by implementing a Public Benefit Rating System (PBRS)?

Ms. Keeler's presentation included a background discussion which contains a definition of open space, the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act, existing county programs and plans and the Natural Lands Plan, the Public Benefit Rating System and Growth Management Hearings Board Decisions.

Ms. Keeler said the GMA does not require the county to include an open space element in the Comprehensive Plan but there are various open space components that the plan needs to address. Components of the Land Use Element, the Rural Element and Urban Growth Areas have open space requirements.

A discussion of the issues includes historic land use practices noting the loss of natural lands and open space, identifying land of importance, community values and priorities for natural lands, Comprehensive Plan

policies and implementation measures and acquisition and protection of natural lands.

The options in the issue paper are as follows:

- A. **Develop policies and implementation strategies for Natural Lands prior to Comprehensive Plan adoption.** Build upon existing draft policies by analyzing similar programs in other counties, reviewing policies and measures in other local plans and programs, and incorporating information obtained from local citizens, organizations, public agencies and survey results that reflect the values and priorities of the community. The Implementation strategy would highlight the remaining areas to be worked on, such as development regulations, long-term goals, and completion dates.
- B. **Adopt existing policies in the draft Comprehensive Plan and incorporate Natural Lands policies after the Natural Plan is adopted.**
- C. **No Action.**

Commissioner Vincent asked if the lands owned by the Department of Natural Resources would continue to be owned and logged by the department. Vince Moore said that while they were concerned about the capability of the lands here and whether the lands can continue to effectively contribute to their programs. Larry Kwarsick said all the agencies had been contacted and asked about their plans for the lands they own.

Commissioner McDowell asked what the definition of developed was as used in the paper. Ms. Keeler said it means the land has an improvement on it worth more than \$25,000. The paper states that 71 percent of the land in Island County is developed.

Commissioner Shelton said the Trust for Public Lands Survey was done to educate the voters what they were preserving and how much it would cost to preserve it.

Commissioner Rose said the questions in the survey seem to be directed toward a desired result.

Keith Dearborn said that in order to use the survey results to make decisions, the Planning Commission would need to have a document which establishes the methodology and the sample size. Larry Kwarsick said this could be provided.

Gene Duvernoy-Public Benefit Rating System

To help the commission determine which lands merit current use taxation because of their open space value. Open space land is the one type of current use taxation land you apply the public benefit rating system to. It does not address forest or agricultural land. The public benefit rating system allows you to craft a process where you determine principally if those lands have the open space value that this community finds important to preserve and/or there are programs on those lands you want to encourage.

Chairman McDowell asked what the real or perceived down side is to having a Public Benefit Rating System.

Mr. Duvernoy said the amount of time spent developing it and the tax shift if the public doesn't feel like it is getting a good value for its payment. In response to another question he said the plan could be designed so that public access would be required.

Mr. Duvernoy said the comments from the public on the display boards that were gathered at several public meetings would be collected into a package that will constitute a natural lands plan. He said it would be a decision for the Planning Commission and the Board of Island County Commissioners whether this would be an element of the comprehensive plan or a separate document.

Commissioner Shelton said that people sometimes support these kinds of plans conceptually but when it comes to voting on something which will affect property taxes, their attitude waivers.

Larry Kwarsick said that in terms of Growth Management, almost everything we do results in a tax shift.

Keith Dearborn said he thought the Natural Lands Planning would help to meet the requirements of GMA in the measures to protect rural character, identifying open space in rural and urban areas, lands useful for public purposes, open space corridors. The more we want to push the density envelope in rural areas, the more we need to show our work for how we have been able to address the matters such as open space preservation.

Vince Moore pointed out that county wide planning policies would need to be amended to implement this kind of plan.

PUBLIC INPUT

Bill Thorn

I think this will be a major contributor to the establishment and maintenance of rural character. Requiring public access may inhibit the lands the county can acquire. Visual access is equally important. I support option A.

Reece Causey

Looking at the survey, it shows that 49 percent said that parks are important but there are more important things to spend tax dollars on like police protection and improving public schools. I think that if this were put before the voters, they would vote it down.

Don Jewett

It seems to me the county is trying to get a list of things that the county should eventually try to buy. There is a finite supply of tax money. I think the county should just take the money out of the general fund and buy these lands one at a time. Most of state and federal lands are not accessible to the public for recreation. If the county buys land, there should definitely be public access, not just visual. I think the survey is phony.

Rob Harbour

Private non-profit organizations can also use this system. The trend is towards shifting taxes for the public good and this public benefit rating system is the only responsible way to do that. I know parcels in open space that really shouldn't be there. This is a very important step.

Rufus Rose

How can we find out about the county lands which are in the parks system which are undeveloped.

Commissioner Shelton

Many of those undeveloped county properties that were given for specific purposes, may never be developed in what some people consider a park. Some of them will be left as is.

The workshop adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

BOARD OF ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ISLAND COUNTY, WASHINGTON

W. L. McDowell, Chairman

Mike Shelton, Member

Tom Shaughnessy, Member

Attest:

Margaret Rosenkranz, Clerk of the Board