

# Ag Land Program – Technical Review Committee

## Meeting Notes

Monday, July 7, 2008

2:30 – 4:30 pm

### Members Attending:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Stoner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dick Yoder	<input type="checkbox"/> Greg Ebe
<input type="checkbox"/> John Gillies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Querhn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Tull
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vicki Hawley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doug Dostal	<input type="checkbox"/> Chuck Antholt

### Others Attending:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul Grey	<input type="checkbox"/> Mary Dickenson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Henry Bierlink
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Samya Lutz	<input type="checkbox"/> David Stalheim	<input type="checkbox"/>

x = attending

o = absent with notice

1. Review agenda, June 16 meeting notes – Henry called attention to the notes in italics which reflected the memo from Chuck that had been discussed in the meeting. A few edits were made to the memo and to #5 in the meeting notes to better reflect the accuracy of the statements.
2. Prioritization Factors – The County was not yet finished with a GIS map of the County with overlays for: zoning, target areas from the PDR program and Rural land study, prime soils, wildlife corridors, family ownerships, etc. The TRC hope to use this information to help identify the areas under the greatest threat of conversion at the July 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Samya suggested this involve the PDR Oversight Committee and the Ag Advisory Committee as well. The group agreed with this suggestion but felt that we would be wise to take at least one look at the layers in a TRC meeting before we expanded the discussion. These groups are the next logical partners in working through priority areas and opportunities.

Henry called attention to a summary of the tools discussed to date. He began with a focus on the TRC's Purpose which is to "**Recommend Tools to be used to Support the Ag Land Program**". He categorized these tools and reviewed them with the TRC. The TRC added some which were not originally listed and clarified others which produced the following outline:

#### Purchase of Development Rights

- Conservation Futures Program
  - Consider reinstating original levy percentage
  - Consider an annual allocation percentage between Parks and Ag Program
- State and Federal Partnership

- Stay aware of changes in Federal Farmland Protection support in 2008 Farm Bill
- Keep in contact with State Legislature and Office of Farmland Preservation
- Whatcom Land Trust
  - Encourage voluntary easements, explore change in tax advantages
  - Evaluate WLT contract for administering PDR easements

### **Transfer of Development Rights**

- Identify priority areas for exporting development rights
- Identify potential receiving areas – cities, UGAs, rezoned rural areas
- Explore density transfer ratios that are acceptable to cities, developers, and incorporate affordable housing concerns
- Develop density transfer banks, brokers

### **Lease of Development Rights**

- Term leases for development rights
- Buys time in high priority areas where conversion is imminent
- Needs more development, exploration

### **Parcel Reconfiguration**

- Recommend a new County program that allows for property owners and the County to negotiate the following elements into a mutually acceptable agreement:
  - Clustering
  - Lot Line adjustments
  - Repackaging single ownership parcels

### **Incentives for Ag Land Protection**

- Open Space Ag taxation
- Right to Farm laws

### **Regulatory Reform**

- Consider both opportunities and competition presented by:
  - Critical Areas protection – wetlands, flood corridors, stream and habitat corridors
  - Water Rights
- Enforcement of current codes
  - Lack of current enforcement of existing regulations
  - Potential to enforce future laws

Paul wondered who will ultimately administer the tools we are suggesting to the Council. It is clear that the current track would be to have the County Administration charge PDS and Public Works to enforce the tools. There was some mention of a

Natural Resources ombudsman position where resource land and critical areas would come together much as all building codes merge with the Building Permit official.

Dick asked if forestry lands were also being incorporated into the set of recommendations we are preparing. It was his belief that they should be. The focus is on the Ag Land Program but much of what is being discussed has implications for all our natural resource lands.

3. Conservation Futures (Natural Heritage Program) Report – An effort to obtain information from the Finance Dept. on the potential bonding capacity available from these funds is underway. They were not able to provide the information yet.
4. Out-of the box Idea Discussion – Larry Stoner is working on a paper outlining code changes, lot line adjustments, and other like tools as contributors to more orderly distribution of housing in the ag resource lands.
5. Receiving Areas – A discussion of the actual limitations by GMA on redefining rural areas ensued. The County is currently trying to get into compliance with GMA due to inadequate review of UGAs, and inadequate designation of LAMIRDs within the rural zones. They are reluctant to consider the TRC’s request to examine the potential of converting non target zone R-5 and R-10 lands to R-1, R-2.5, or another more intense zone. The County produced a table examining the potential of achieving additional densities by converting non target zone R-10 to R-5 (779 @ 1:1 ratio) and a 480 acre block of ag land (2,551 @ 1:1 ratio).

This discussion prompted some speculation as to how the math concerning our task might appear. Based on the past 4-year period, the PDR program has extinguished 77 development rights, or about 19/year.

Identified Development Rights not yet exercised	3,898
- Assume 50% relocated through parcel reconfiguration	1,949
- Assume 19 dr’s retired through PDR over 25 years	475
Development Rights to be transferred	1,474

6. Public Involvement and education – Paul presented a draft outline for the anticipated Public forums in the Public Involvement Plan. He asked for feedback from the TRC in upcoming days as the finishing touches are made on the forums which are anticipated to be held in late August and September.
7. BIA Questionnaire – Bill presented a list of questions that his constituents have been asking. He noted that we would be well advised to consider clear and succinct answers to these questions as they likely represent questions that many of the public are asking.

A few of the questions were discussed. Henry offered to prepare a draft written response to them for the TRC to consider, edit, and eventually adopt as a means of communicating our purpose and activities with the public. *(draft response attached)*

#### 8. Resources – Available

- “Agricultural Urbanism” – Delta, BC example – July 7
- Conservation Futures Program – tables and expenses - June 2, 16
- Transfer of Development Rights summary – CTED website – June 2
- Whatcom PDR Program Objectives and Principles – June 2
- American Farmland Trust Farmland Protection Toolbox – May 19
- Natural Heritage Plan – 1991 – copies at 3/3 mtg.
- Purchase of Development Right Program summary – distributed 2/11
- AAC Rural Land Study – distributed 2/11
- TDR Program Market Value Estimates – 2003 – Pruetz report – distributed 3/3
- Agricultural Transfer of Development Right Presentation: The Snohomish County Experience – available through WFF office – 4/21
- Proposed Ag Land Work Program – a Powerpoint Presentation by Kraig Olason to the County Council, October, 2006 – 4/21
- Maps:
  - potential build out in the ag zones
  - open space ag areas
  - CAO – Wetlands
  - CAO – Frequently Flooded Areas
  - CAO – Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
  - Ag Zone Adjacent Ownership example

#### Meeting Schedule

July 21

August 4

August 18

September 8

September 22

October 6

October 20

November 3

November 17

December 1

December 15