

Ag Land Program – Technical Review Committee

Meeting Notes

Monday, July 21, 2008

2:30 – 4:30 pm

Members Attending:

Larry Stoner

John Gillies

Vicki Hawley

Dick Yoder

Bill Querhn

Doug Dostal

Greg Ebe

Bob Tull

Chuck Antholt

Others Attending:

Paul Grey

Samya Lutz

Mary Dickenson

David Stalheim

Henry Bierlink

x = attending

o = absent with notice

1. Review agenda, July 7 meeting notes – No changes to the notes were suggested.
2. Prioritization Factors – Samya delivered an additional wall map showing a parcel analysis within the Ag Zone. She also walked the committee through various layers using GIS mapping of the County. These layers included: Townships, Sections, Ag zone parcels, PDR target areas, Rural study areas, Wildlife concentration areas/corridors, Whatcom Land Trust parcels, Prime soils, and Adjacent taxpayer groupings. Samya also showed the Committee eight scenarios using various parcel sizes and ranges. The purpose of this exercise was to identify the areas under the greatest threat of conversion.

The importance of adjacent or near adjacent Ag parcels was discussed as well as the minimum parcel sizes suitable for farming. The size of suitable parcels varies depending upon the nature of the farming. Working backwards, Samya selected a PDR target area and applied various layers. The result was that a high degree of parcelization has taken place in the area.

Looking at layering on a countywide basis was a bit overwhelming. The Committee discussed looking at areas at a section level or perhaps ¼ sections. The tentative conclusion was to keep the analysis at a section level, choose several sections, and see if conclusions could be drawn applicable for the entire county. Samya was asked to select several sections for review at the next meeting.

Dick suggested that we should have one set of rules for land ordinances at all levels, city, county, state and federal.

3. Conservation Futures (*Natural Heritage Program*) Report – Samya provided a handout to the Committee with three scenarios at levy rates of .04229, .04499 and .0625. The later levy would require a vote of the people. Within these scenarios Samya illustrated the proceeds if 40%, 50% and 60% were used of the Conservation Futures funds. The range of net bonding proceeds from these scenarios was \$4.8M to \$10.5M. Federal funding would provide additional leverage to our local funding. The general consensus was that it would be cheaper to buy development rights today than tomorrow based on historical appreciation patterns.
4. Out-of-the box Idea discussion – Larry Stoner – Larry described the idea of moving (shuffling) development rights (DR) from one property to another within the same farm ownership. The idea is to move DRs from prime soils to non-prime soils or forested lots. Larry had been working on this with Curt Maberry Farms. DR shuffles of this kind might be approved by Planning after an advisory committee had reviewed and OK'd it.
5. Public Involvement and education – Paul walked the Committee through the current design for the upcoming public forums. Four sessions will be scheduled throughout the 3rd and 4th quarters. Different hands-on exercises were discussed about how best to illustrate the trade-offs involved in reducing DRs within our Ag lands.
6. BIA questions – Paul referred the Committee to draft answers which had been developed by Henry in response to previously submitted questions from the BIA. Bill thought the answers were OK for the TRC but too general for the public-at-large. Specifically, Bill thought the answers didn't define the problem clear enough nor create a sense of urgency for solutions. Henry had inquired about getting yearly data on the certified number of farmed acres in the county from the FSA in Spokane. Their response for providing this data (and other data requested) was a minimum of \$2,000. Paul will pursue options for lowering or eliminating this cost.
7. Misc – Paul made available a hand-out recapping the progress of the TRC thus far. This hand-out was sent to the County Council and the Administration as a status report.

8. Resources – Available

- Conservation Futures Bonding Capacity – July 8
- 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 – Presentation by Kraig Olason to the County Council, October, 2006 – 4/21
- Maps:
 - Parcel analysis – Ag Zone – July, 2008
 - 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 7

July 21

August 4

August 18

September 8

September 22

October 6

October 20

November 3

November 17

December 1

December 15