

Ag Land Program – Technical Review Committee Agenda

Monday, Aug 04, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Gillies	<input type="checkbox"/> Bill Querhn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Tull
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Stalheim	<input type="checkbox"/>

x = attending

o = absent with notice

1. Review agenda, July 21 meeting notes

Paul distributed articles from the Capital Press and the Bellingham Herald that provided more information on the various growth debates and farmland protection tools. He also noted that he and Henry had met with the County Executive to present progress on the Public Involvement Plan to date. A presentation to the Natural Resources Committee of the Council was planned for Tuesday am the 5th.

David reported that the Growth Management Coordination Council had formed consisting of representatives of the cities and other regional entities. They are preparing population and employment forecasts to prepare for the growth management plan update. The Jones and Stokes firm is providing consultant help.

The committee reviewed the July 21 Meeting Notes and found them an accurate account of the meeting discussion.

2. Prioritization Factors – Samya introduced the maps with a caveat that the process was useful to help identify areas to focus on but that site by site analysis would still be necessary to make use of any of the “tools” we are considering. She noted that the maps were set up section by section and that the degree of parcelization in each section was highly varied. The parameters of 17 acres and under representing a small parcel and 35 acres and more a large parcel was selected but could be adjusted if the TRC preferred.

The exercise provoked debate over what factors were important to consider when evaluating the most important properties to protect. Factors discussed included parcel size, economic value (i.e. ability to support high value ag), location (i.e. contiguous to other ag areas), and soils (prime categories 1-4). Some looked at sections where a large

degree of parcelization had already occurred as lower priority areas; others felt that parcel size was useful as a factor for evaluating and determining the broad boundaries of the area we want to protect for ag uses but once that area was determined (ag zone and rural study areas) all available development rights were priorities. The smaller parcels in the target zones may be the highest priorities as they are often the most vulnerable to conversion.

Samya and David will bring back the maps in future meetings to use as a resource. Henry suggested we eliminate the built out parcels as we will likely not be seeing too many existing houses eliminated.

3. Out-of the box Idea Discussion – Larry Stoner introduced some history as to how the code has been interpreted in the past. He advanced some ideas to contribute to a discussion on DR shuffles and lot-line adjustments as tools to minimize the effect of increased density on the farms in the area. Dick noted that our goal should be to get rid of these densities rather than figure out how to accommodate them. The members generally agreed this should be the first choice but that the magnitude of the task of eliminating densities, or even transferring them to other areas, causes us to look at other opportunities as well. Larry’s density shuffle ideas would not reduce density in the ag area but instead locate them in areas that would have a reduced impact on the farms.

Larry noted that the only way these ideas would work would be to have an independent advisory board evaluate and approve each proposal. He felt that the ag community should represent a majority of this board. Henry reported that Chuck had offered the County’s Ag Advisory Committee as a likely candidate for this responsibility.

This proposal for new sections and amended sections in the County land division code (20.40.250) will be further examined in future TRC meetings. County staff will also provide feedback on the suggested code changes.

4. Public Forums – Paul provided an update of the plan to hold public forums with the ideas being generated by the TRC. He is preparing for 2 sets of 2 forums, one in Bellingham, the other in Lynden. The first set of forums will use information generated by the community survey as a starting point for discussion. The second set will build on the information generated in the first forums. Part of all the forums will be a planned small group exercise where groups can consider a list of available tools and apply them to a property we hope to protect.

Bob questioned if we were ready to have such an exercise. What tools would we recommend as available? Would there be some reality to the amount of money available to be applied to the protection tools? Paul and David will discuss these questions and make some recommendations to the next TRC meeting on the 18th. Paul noted that it would very useful to have the TRC members attend these forums to hear and see what are on the minds of the public.

Meeting Schedule

- *NOTE: the September meetings have been changed to the 2nd and 4th Mondays to avoid Labor Day.*
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| August 18 | October 6 | November 17 |
| September 8 | October 20 | December 1 |
| September 22 | November 3 | December 15 |

DRAFT