

Meeting Notes
Envision Skagit Citizen Committee
January 6, 2011 – 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Skagit County Administration Bldg

Attendees:

Kerri Cook
Cory Ertel
Peggy Flynn
Jim Meyer
Kim Mower
Grace Popoff

Gustavo Ramos, Jr.
Tim Rosenhan
Nate Youngquist
Doris Robbins
Ryan Sakuma
John Cheney

Staff:

Kirk Johnson, Skagit Co. PM
Lisa Dally Wilson, Facilitator
Josh Greenberg, Skagit Co. GIS

Note that all morning and afternoon presentations and discussions with presenters can be viewed on : http://skagit.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=790&meta_id=51332

Meeting Handouts:

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Summary Meeting Minutes from Dec 1 CC Meeting (emailed)
3. Public Outreach Meeting Schedule
4. Highlights, Economic Development Scenario
5. Skagit County 2000-2060 Population Projection Scenarios
6. Envision Skagit Letter to Mayors and County Commissioners with Questions for Today's meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began shortly after 8:30 am.

8:40 – Committee Business

- **December 1st meeting notes:** Approved
- **Protocol for contacting Skagit County staff:** Kirk Johnson has requested that all Citizen Committee members who need access to Skagit County staff work through Kirk as a primary point of contact. Lisa Dally Wilson is the secondary point of contact if Kirk is inaccessible. Please give Kirk several days to reply.
- **Citizen Committee Timesheets. Thank you!**
- **Citizen Committee Meeting calendar revisions:** The Committee will be rescheduling the 2 day retreat. The retreat will be moved later by one month. The proposed dates are 5/13 and 5/14. An additional CC meeting will be scheduled for April. A revised calendar will be emailed to the CC with proposed dates to ensure that everyone can attend. The previously scheduled May briefing of the County Commissioners and Mayors will also be postponed by one month.

9:00 Envision Skagit Built Environment

9:00 – 9:45 County Commissioners, Mayors Presentation

Attendees:

Mayor Dean Maxwell, Anacortes
Mayor Ed Brunz, Burlington
Mayor Ramon Hayes, LaConner
Mayor Bud Norris, Mt. Vernon
Mayor Mike Anderson, Sedro-Woolley
Commissioner Don Wesen
Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt
Commissioner Sharon Dillon

Each Participant addressed their community's visions and goals and constraints to reaching those visions and goals. After the presentations, there was open discussion between the Mayors, Commissioners and Citizen Committee. Key points below:

Anacortes:

Timeframe for city's planning is 20 years. Goal is a "small" community feel with more density and mixed use in the downtown core. Ideally more public transit, less cars. Sustainable development. Some pressure to annex to the south. Have acreage for industrial use. Also the largest water purveyor in Skagit County. Community needs good quality jobs. Constraints include the economy, fact that development doesn't happen logically and sequentially, and constraints associated with expansion and being an island.

Burlington:

Don't know what to expect in 50 years – that's stretching it a bit. 20 years is more realistic. Burlington has major flood issues – there's no high ground, not much place to expand. Would like downtown to be higher density, promote infill, cottage units. Would like to encourage high quality, sustainable, commercial uses in I-5 retail corridor, make it a one-stop place to live and play, with transit. Hope to be a tourist destination with trails – Burlington is at the intersection of five scenic byways, and the Cascade Trail. Concerned about self-contained communities outside of existing cities, not sure that's a good idea.

La Conner:

Committed to the corporate (town) boundaries and management of growth within those borders. Retain the small town, northwest feel, maintain dynamics within community. Do anticipate handling some growth with infill. Want to contain costs, not increase the tax burden, but increase economic revenues. Tourism will be the main source of income, but would like to diversify, and maintain livability for residents. Town has limited industrial capacity. Challenge for citizen committee will be thinking 50 years in the future; hard to do; who would have expected changes we've seen over last 50 years?

Mt. Vernon

City doesn't have a vision beyond 20 years; that's its planning horizon. Not comfortable with longer view, it's not realistic, not an expense the city will prioritize now. In the 20 year future, foresee a robust commercial and employment base, vibrant downtown with high density mixed use development (residential, commercial and entertainment), riverfront improvements. A hub for living, working, playing. Need an adequate commercial tax base. Mount Vernon feels they have accepted higher residential growth through 2025 than other communities; there's a disconnect between residential population and our commercial tax base. I-5 corridor is the area most likely to support commercial growth, but at the moment Mount Vernon can't expand into the floodplain.

Sedro Woolley

Constrained by river and agricultural land to south and west. Can grow to the north, currently investing in infrastructure, could see potential doubling in size to the north. Need more jobs, industrial, commercial, and tax base. Would like to have business in Sedro Woolley but having difficulty attracting them. Originally thought Mount Vernon's allowing Haggen grocery store in residential area was a mistake, now sees that as a benefit, making services accessible to residents. City hasn't looked past 20 years; not sure how realistic 50 years is. Budget is in survival mode, need to prioritize current needs. Constraints: face competition for jobs, for instance from the Port which can provide cheaper rent. Not a believer in self-contained communities, really they're pockets of sprawl, cities can handle the growth.

Skagit County

Commissioner Wesen speaking for self, more than Board of County Commissioners. Look at 1960 comp plan, our current plan is pretty similar. Our farm land is one of the most unique in the world, we need to protect it. Need to create jobs for families, so people can buy a home. Continue to protect and maintain a sustainable natural resource industry, forest land is 70 percent of the county. People want to live in Skagit County, we want to build livable, walkable communities, with good jobs. What is the future economy? Need a clean environment, drinking water, and improved water quality. The tax base is only so big – we need to focus on private-public partnerships, and city-county partnerships to address the tax base issue and avoid competition amongst entities.

General CC Discussion

- Future UGA expansion, concerned about floodplain, Ag land
- Sharing resources, could Mount Vernon and Burlington work together to account for some discrepancy between residential and commercial bases? Currently they are sharing public safety services and fiber, nothing more.
- Consider joint efforts, joint school districts, partnerships between city and county and private public partnerships.
- Sustainability, what do you mean?
- Where should growth go in the County? Not floodplain, not ag land, where? There are higher areas in the county, such as Conway Hill, Bayview. County does not expect to take on the task of providing services. Only discussing rural areas.
- Bayview, who provides services?
- Need an economically viable future requiring collaboration between cities and county. Concept of an industrial "basket," where there is a pooling of resources. Will cities and

county consider this? Consider Minnesota model. Don't need two Costcos, one on each side of the river.

- Acknowledgement and accolades for out of the box thinking by Citizen Committee.
- Concerns about redevelopment and infill. Housing and neighborhoods, vacated big box stores.

10:30 - 10:40 Break

10:40 – 12:15 Planning Directors, Citizen Committee Detailed Discussion

Attendees:

Jack Moore, Sedro Woolley
Margaret Fleek, Burlington
Ryan Larson, Anacortes
Jana Hansen, Mount Vernon
John Doyle, La Conner
Gary Christiansen, Skagit County

Each Participant addressed aspects of their city, town or county that provided specifics regarding population, capacity, employment growth, expansion, future boundaries, residential densities, limitations, collaborative planning, other

Sedro-Woolley –not as constrained as other cities. Want to increase jobs, capture buying power that passes through city, have commercial uses along state routes. Investing in sewer and road infrastructure to the north. Have modified zoning to accommodate business, allow more commercial. Facing competition for industrial use from Port. Sedro-Woolley can offer advantages including cheaper rents, and lower labor costs. Current pop is 10,000, may grow by 50 percent in 20 years.

Burlington – state annexation laws not working. Burlington has huge sanitary sewer system, serves Alger, and Bayview Ridge. County is not set up to provide urban services. As to fully-contained communities, the cities control the votes through the GMA Steering Committee. Cities want to focus development in existing cities/town boundaries, establish non-motorized connections. Stormwater cleanup is a huge issue. Burlington can only take a few 1000 more people. Pop. is 8900 now, GMA 20-year forecast pop is 12,000 total, maybe 15,000 total in 50 years.

Anacortes – has planned to 2025. Now at 17,000 people, can handle another 2000 by 2025. Expansion areas are hilly rocky, very difficult to develop. Likely 4 dwelling units per acre (dua), maybe 4 to 6 dua on the west side of the land. Anacortes is looking at a state of the art water bottling facility, 700-1000 jobs. The Anacortes Futures project involves the Port, City, Chamber, and MJB developers. Taking an overall look at Anacortes, also focusing on a few important areas: waterfront, and commercial area along highway 20. People commute into Anacortes to work, out to live.

Mount Vernon – now at about 30,000 residents. By 2025, projecting 47,000. Most of UGA area is residential; tax base doesn't match population. 2006 buildable lands analysis said, even if all

existing, under-developed commercial lands were fully developed, city would still have a deficit of buildable land. Downtown: focusing on redevelopment, vision of live, work and play. City's 20 year population allocation can fit within current city limits. Tax base includes sales tax, property tax, real estate excise tax, need a sustainable mix. City and county need to work together, resolve commercial/residential imbalance.

LaConner – Future is redevelopment and densification. La Conner population capacity: 1200. We're a test case, how things can work in a sustainable context. Pretty good balance of population and retail. Stormwater and water quality are big issues. Creating more of a joint economic base for the county and cities/towns should be considered. GMA was massive compromise; based on a model of growth; it's not sustainable. We're engaged, but we're not solving the key issues yet.

Skagit County – Growth will happen, need to plan for it. Next 50 years, looking at 100,000 new residents. Where does population go: keep open possibility of new communities, protect resource lands, keep people out of harm's way, the floodplain. Look to the past: the 1966 comprehensive plan map on the wall, that plan has been largely realized.

12:15 Working Lunch

12:45 Envision Skagit Economic Development

12:45 – 2:15 Economic Development in the Skagit – Panel Presentation and Open Discussion

Participants

Don Wick, EDASC, moderator
Patsy Martin, Port of Skagit County
Bob Hyde, Port of Anacortes
Sally Harris, WA Dept. of Commerce)

Moderator Don Wick gave a brief statistical overview of the Economy in Skagit County, followed by presentations by the other three participants.

2:15 Break

2:30 Economic Development Scenario

Jan Ellingson and Kirk Johnson presented the main concepts and drivers in the Economic Development Scenario and provided some background to the development of the scenario.

Some discussion points included:

- Clarify “fully contained communities” versus “rural villages”
- Current scenario allows some UGA expansion into AgNRL and floodplain.
- Clarify with cities, rural villages were intended to take burden off the cities, and it was not expected that cities would provide services.

3:00

Citizen Committee Internal Discussion and what do you need to know?

The Citizen Committee voiced what are becoming their bigger issues, concerns, tradeoffs and thoughts about the process. These include:

- No other group has this perspective
- Various entities are not unified
- Need GMA 101 and as part of their process, address just how far we can go, understand what we can and cannot do under GMA as it currently stands. – Late Feb
- We should make our recommendations with the assumption that laws can change
- WE NEED a description of the policies in each scenario and key drivers. 60 pg document will be posted on ftp site, also will send to CC a grid that was developed by the Steering Committee and 1 pg summary of key drivers for each scenario (2-3 pages for plan trend).
- Need to engage other decision makers in Skagit – up river people, city councils throughout.
- Should we be making a separate presentation to each mayor and their council?
- How can we break the local logjam?
- Concerns about drainage impact from Bayview. What has the collaboration been about those impacts on farmland, eg., dike districts, Bayview. County drainage plan was developed, but was anything ever done?
- What are the underlying conflicts (political obstacles) that are prohibiting collaborative regional planning and a regional perspective?
- School Districts. Merge them. Why so many?
- How many functioning government entities exist in Skagit County per capita??
- What is the buildout capacity in the rural County (outside current UGAS)
- What are the development costs for specific development densities (per unit, or per acre)?
- Constant theme – need for regional cooperation and collaboration. It is missing.
- Need total shift in structure, regional taxbase. Major challenge with current tax structure is competition. Will require organizational realignment.

4:00

Public Outreach

Citizen Committee updated the status on the community meetings, with a number of requests for information, questions about handouts, posters, other materials and request for Skagit County staff assistance.

Kirk Johnson provided an update on the Outreach Toolbox being developed for the meetings, and Lisa Dally Wilson provided a brief description of process design for conducting the meetings.

Outreach To Do:

1. Kirk, Emma to coordinate with Gus Ramos and Ryan Sakuma and set a new date for the larger Community outreach meeting that will target Mt. Vernon, Burlington and possibly Sedro Woolley. Gus would like to get this scheduled as soon as possible. Sometime the 3rd week of February (check school district calendars for Presidents Week and avoid it). Also pin down venue. Locations suggested at the meeting were St Joseph Center, a High School, Burlington Library, Skagit Valley College. Other?

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2. Start to work advertising for all meetings
3. Prepare a one page handout with each of the three questions and blank lines so that people who do not want to speak can provide input at the meetings. Put Skagit County mailing address on the other side so it can be folded and mailed.
4. Prepare other handouts (or a list of what will be available)
5. Determine what posters, maps, etc. will be traveling to the meetings
6. Review Emma's powerpoint and toolkit and finalize. Get it to the CC members and others who will be presenting at local meetings.
7. Schedule a one-hour meeting where CC members can come view the power point and talk about the presentation, PRIOR to the first outreach meeting (week of January 17th).
8. Review Lisa's questions and framework design. Finalize it and provide questions and design to CC members.

4:35 Adjourn