Meeting Notes
Envision Skagit Citizen Committee
March 21, 2011
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Skagit Valley College, Multi-Purpose Room

Attendees:

John Cheney
Kerri Cook
Peggy Flynn
Jim Meyer
Kim Mower
Grace Popoff
Gustavo Ramos, Jr.
Doris Robbins
Tim Rosenhan
Ryan Sakuma

Staff:

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

Meeting Handouts:

1. Meeting Notes, March 10 CC Meeting (e-mailed)
2. Public comments collected from email, written forms and the ES Website
3. Citizen Committee Final 2010-2011 Meeting Schedule, with Objectives and/or Topic Areas
4. Draft Guiding Principle #2, From CC Vision Statement: Protect Natural Resource Lands and Industries
5. Agricultural Scenario Policy Drivers, January 20, 2011
6. Major Forestry Decision Points
7. Draft Guiding Principle #3 : Protect, Preserve, Restore Environmental Resources and Values
8. Key Drivers, Ecosystem Scenario, December 22, 2010
9. Skagit Local/Regional Food System
10. Win/Win Opportunities for Farms, Forestry, and the Ecosystem: Incentivizing Public Benefits on Private Lands
11. Lancaster County Smart Growth Toolbox

Committee Business

The meeting notes for March 10 were approved.

Lisa noted that future committee agendas would identify expected outcomes. As requested by the CC, they will also include 15 minutes for unstructured discussion concerning topics of interest to CC members.

Groundrules. The CC further discussed the role of e-mail in committee business, following up and clarifying points discussed on March 10. The CC should avoid conducting full committee business via e-mail. Questions for clarification are welcome, as is e-mail discussion between individual committee members. In general, if CC members wish to send materials to the full committee, they should send them to Lisa or Kirk for forwarding, although this is not necessary if materials are time-sensitive. If CC members have items they would like placed on future agendas, they should notify Kirk and Lisa.

The CC reconsidered its groundrule concerning the number of votes of members present that will be necessary to move recommendations forward. When total committee membership was 14, this number was nine. With membership now at 12, the CC agreed by consensus to reduce the required number to eight.

Outreach/Community Perceptions. The CC discussed efforts so far to reach out to city elected officials and staff, and to youths and minorities. Kirk has made extensive efforts to reach out to cities, but city participation so far has been relatively minimal. CC members are encouraged to reach out to city elected officials they know. About 300 to 350 people have attended community meetings for the project. Comments have generally been similar across meeting and in line with comments on the project website and past public opinion polls, with much support for agriculture, long-term planning and smart growth. However, participation has mostly been from white, middle-aged members of the community. A meeting with high school student leaders is scheduled for April 18. A meeting with interested members of the Latino/Hispanic community is scheduled for April 27. If comments from these meetings differ from the general comments received from the wider community, there may be a need to consider additional outreach. Additional email, snail mail and web public comments were distributed to the CC.

Scope of Recommendations. The CC has a large amount of work ahead to develop recommendations it will share with the public. Kirk noted that recommendations will fall into two categories: land use policies that can be modeled with Envision; and recommendations that cannot be modeled but are nevertheless important to the CC's "Preferred Future." Lisa noted that for the latter recommendations, the committee need not get into specifics, but could instead identify issues that need to be addressed and a general approach for how to address them. Kirk noted that no other entity is taking a comprehensive, long-term approach to future planning. He said it was better that the final set of recommendations focus on a smaller number of bigger issues, rather than a large number of recommendations about more detailed issues.

Common Themes and Draft Concepts—Concept 2, Protect Natural Resource Lands

The CC reviewed the handout "Agricultural Scenario Policy Drivers, January 20, 2011," which was developed through the Agricultural Technical Committee. The discussion also referred to the handout "Protect Natural Resource Lands and Industries," which Lisa prepared based on March 10 CC discussion of "The Vision – Common Themes and Draft Concepts." The CC agreed that the first bullet on the latter document should recommend that transfer and purchase of development right programs should apply county-wide, not just in the delta.

After CC discussion, Lisa clarified that at this stage the CC was making initial recommendations, not final decisions. Recommendations that can be modeled will be tested in Envision to evaluate their consequences.

Kirk clarified that Ag-NRL lands have been designated based on state guidelines and generally have the highest quality soils and substantial existing agricultural infrastructure. Rural Resource-NRL (RRc-NRL) lands are generally not as high quality. Rural Reserve(RRv) lands have not been designated for resource use, but in aggregate there is more agricultural activity on Rural Reserve lands than Rural Resource lands.

On the "Agricultural Scenarios Policy Drivers" document, the CC agreed with item 1.a. On item 1.b (which reads "No UGA expansion into RRc-NRL with agricultural soils characteristics"), the CC has asked Kirk and Josh to re-word the restrictions on UGA expansions to address lands with active agricultural uses or highly productive agricultural soils. The CC will review the proposed language at the next meeting. The new language is intended to restrict UGA expansion into NRL lands that are actively

farmed or have high quality agricultural soils, while allowing UGA expansion into some Rural Resource and Rural Reserve lands that are not farmed and do not have high quality soils.

The CC agreed agreed to 1d and 1e, discussed 1.f) but took no position on it. The CC recommended editing 1.g) as follows: Locate a centralized Agricultural Industrial Park ~~within the Bayview Ridge UGA~~ where ~~large~~ agricultural industrial uses and processing facilities can be located. The CC also agreed to item 2 in the policy drivers document, no-net-loss; and to items 3.a and 3.b, transfer of development rights.

Briefing: Floodplain Issues

The CC interrupted its discussion of Natural Resource Lands to receive a briefing from Tim DeVries, the county's Floodplain Manager, concerning the NOAA Biological Opinion on FEMA floodplain regulations and the current appeal by city governments of FEMA's revised floodplain delineations within Skagit County. To comply with the Biological Opinion, by September 22 local governments in the Puget Sound region must either adopt a model floodplain ordinance issued by FEMA or adopt an alternative that the federal government determines meets standards established in the Biological Opinion to protect endangered salmon and orcas. Stringent standards apply to a "Protected Area" that includes the channel migration zone and riparian buffers. Lower standards apply to the remainder of the floodplain. These standards will have the greatest impact above SR9.

The cities are appealing FEMA's hydrologic modeling. An initial decision on their appeal is 3-4 months away. Regardless, all FEMA flood maps are currently on hold while the agency considers whether to continue its current policy of recognizing only certified levees when modeling the extent of floods.

Common Themes and Draft Concepts—Concept 2, Protect Natural Resource Lands (cont.)

The CC voted to replace 4.a and 4.b) in the "Agricultural Scenario Policy Drivers" with the third bullet under 3 in its "Protect Natural Resources Lands and Industries" document. The CC asked that the Agricultural Technical Committee explore the possibility of changing "Landowners" to "Communities" in 4.c), and generally supported 4.c and 4.d. The CC did not address item 5 with the exception of 5.d. They did not support 5.d) as currently written, but Kim will research alternatives. There will be a "placeholder" attached to 5.d which warrants additional CC discussion.

In answer to a question, staff stated that no one has researched the feasibility of the "no net loss of Ag-NRL" policy. Are there 2700 acres elsewhere that can replace Ag-NRL loss through the agreed TFI. Lisa suggested that the CC may wish to recommend that the County start identifying lands for possible addition to Ag-NRL, since future development may begin to close options.

The CC agreed to move recommendations regarding shellfish and fishing to the "Water" section of its recommendations. Kirk will draft some recommendations on forestry for potential addition to the "Protect Natural Resources Lands and Industries" document, which will be the first thing on the CC's agenda at its next meeting.

Jim briefly discussed the handout he developed on "Skagit Local/Regional Food System." The CC may wish to include a recommendation for a Food Policy Committee in its updated recommendations.

Kim briefly discussed her research on environmental markets for agriculture. Kirk noted that John had drafted a short discussion paper on the same general topic, "Win/Win Opportunities for Farms, Forestry, and the Ecosystem: Incentivizing Public Benefits on Private Lands," which was available for interested CC members.

5:05 Adjourn

Parking Lot: Sea Level Rise: What are the impacts on land uses, other than Agriculture.