

**Meeting Notes**  
**Envision Skagit Citizen Committee**  
**June 20, 2011**  
**8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**  
**Padilla Bay Interpretive Center**

**Attendees:**

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

**Staff:**

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

**Guest presenter:**

Len Barson, Nature Conservancy

**Meeting Handouts:**

1. Meeting Notes, June 9 CC meeting (e-mailed)
2. Envision Skagit Presentation: Public Funding for Conservation, The Nature Conservancy
3. Vision Statement, 6-14-11 draft
4. Edits, Compact Communities, 6-13-11
5. Edits, Statement on Climate Change, 6-20-11
6. Edits, Industrial Tax Revenue Sharing, 6-6-11
7. Edits, Housing Variety and Affordability, 6-13-11
8. Edits, Natural Resource Lands and Industries, 6-13-11
9. Goal Statement VIII. Economic Vitality, draft 6/14/11
10. Goal Statement VI. Water/Wastewater, draft 6-20-11
11. Envision Skagit Open House Comments (with blue headings), 6/20/11
12. Additional Citizen Comments, starting with Annie Lohman
13. Letter to CC from Andrea Xaver
- (13.b) Four citizen comments transcribed from easel notes at June 16 public meeting
14. Executive Summary, Envision Skagit 2060 Draft Recommendations
15. Map, Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, Land Use Plan
16. Exploring the No Growth Option
17. Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population brochure
18. ECONorthwest memo to Kirk Johnson, Preliminary Analysis: Fiscal Implications of Increased Density in Skagit County

**Committee Business**

The meeting notes for the June 9 meeting were approved.

**Open Space Feasibility Study Proposal**

Kirk said that the Board of County Commissioners had suggested The Nature Conservancy (TNC) make a presentation to the CC about a feasibility study it wants to conduct to consider potential open space ballot measure in Skagit County. TNC is seeking a letter of support from the commissioners who are interested in hearing the CC's thoughts on the matter.

Kirk introduced Len Barson, Senior Policy Advisor in TNC's Seattle office. Len reviewed handout #2, which summarizes TNC's experience with state and local conservation funding nationwide. He said that TNC worked closely with state and local governments to craft proposals that would be attractive to the voters in each particular place, leading to a high success rate. Feasibility research is the first step.

TNC is seeking approval from the Board of County Commissioners to initiate the feasibility study. This meets requirements of the foundation that is funding the research and helps TNC comply with rules for tax-exempt non-profit organizations. Kirk noted that community acceptance of the feasibility study would likely be greater if it was clear that the CC supported the effort and the Board of County Commissioners formally requested it.

In answer to CC questions, Len stated that TNC is interested in farmland preservation and has been working with Skagitians to Preserve Farmland in its initial conversations. Other conservation objectives could also be pursued, ranging from open space to trails to habitat conservation and should be based on priorities as identified by local residents. A ballpark scale for the bond issue is \$20-40 million, to be generated over 10 years to 15 years. Local funding would likely attract significant match from TNC and others. The Board of Commissioners would decide the specific tax package to put before the voters, including what the funds could be spent for. The Board would also determine policies regarding public access. The Board has told TNC that the ballot timing would be after 2012.

At this stage, TNC would like a formal statement from the CC in support of a letter from the Board of Commissioners that requests technical assistance from TNC to perform the feasibility research. The CC discussed how it wanted to proceed at the end of the meeting.

### **Committee Business (cont.)**

Ryan mentioned a presentation that was recently made to the Economic Development Association of Skagit County on the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point, which would involve an extra 9-18 trains a day through Skagit County. After some discussion, the CC decided against adding any reference to this in the transportation goal statement.

CC members discussed the June 16 public meeting and some of their own conversations with citizens outside of the meeting. There was consensus that things seem to be going well, and that the biggest concern was how to ensure follow through. Lisa said that discussion of timelines for action would be on the agenda June 30.

### **Review Final Vision Statement**

After review of handout #3, the CC agreed to the following edits: in the second sentence of the first paragraph, "The quality, diversity, and productivity of our defining agricultural and ecological landscapes in Skagit County are globally significant and increasingly rare"; and in the first and second sentences of the second paragraph, "To preserve the character of our defining landscapes and foster economically vibrant communities, we recommend that population growth be directed to cities as much as possible, that an effort be made to protect lands now that will maintain our agricultural heritage, conserve our ecosystems, and serve as connected open space into the future, and that all of us in Skagit County work collaboratively toward our common goals. We cannot continue to sprawl as we have and preserve what we most value ~~by sprawling over it.~~" The CC also discussed possibly modifying the reference to "We" that introduces the vision statement, depending on the context of where the statement appears.

## **Review final edits of developed goal statements**

Lisa noted that handouts #4-8 included just the pages of the recommendations that had been edited based on discussion at the June 9 meeting.

For handout #4, the CC asked Kirk to modify and elaborate on the sentence, "Find ways to replace any existing affordable units that are lost through redevelopment."

For handout #5, the CC agreed to replace "potential impacts" with "practical choices raised by the potential impacts of climate change."

For handout #6, the CC modified the second new sentence to read, "That is, cities would not add established industry taxes to the Industrial Tax Basket." Cory raised a concern that the second bullet under the Industrial Tax Basket recommendation reads as though it might imply the county would receive no tax revenues from new industry. John was asked to work with Cory on alternative language.

Edits in handouts #7 and 8, for housing and natural resource lands, were approved as shown.

Lisa asked if there were any other edits or additions CC members wanted to discuss, beside those for economic vitality and water/wastewater. Kirk noted that goal statement 3 still contained a reference to staff following up on in-river fishing. CC members noted that the issue was very complicated and controversial. There was general consensus that some statement should be included, with broader language that applied to all fishers. Jim suggested that it might reference "voluntary stewardship," similar to the recommendation for farmers. Lisa asked that John draft alternative language for the CC's review.

## **Economic Vitality Section – CC comments/edits**

The CC reviewed handout #9. The CC asked Kirk to wordsmith the second sentence under the summary of Goal Statement 1, to clarify the reference to the increasingly regional nature of economic competition. The CC also approved edits to the third bullet under Goal Statement 1 to refer to "possible" expansion of either Mount Vernon or Burlington, instead of the proposed expansion of Mount Vernon.

The CC asked to add a heading between the summary of other goal statements and the recommendations for economic vitality. The CC approved new language drafted by Grace under recommendation 1, as follows: "Economic development approaches that work in the urban areas near the I-5 corridor are not necessarily transferable to rural Skagit County. A rural economic strategy should support small-scale, sustainable businesses and industries that enable people to work without commuting long distances. Affordable broadband services comparable to that offered in urban areas is essential in rural areas as well. Broadband enables people to work from home, run successful small businesses, provide services to both local residents and tourists, and access government information and services on an equal basis with urban residents."

The CC discussed recommendation 2, on sustainable use of natural resources, at some length. Some CC members were concerned that the recommendation, as written, might discourage some businesses that would be valuable employers in the local economy. Other CC members said that sustainability made

economic sense and was increasingly a normal part of business plans. Kirk said he would draft a revised recommendation for CC review in the afternoon. Jim asked that the final bullet of the third recommendation be amended to add a reference to training in sustainable agriculture at the high school and technical school levels, referring to WSU's Viva Farms program as an example.

### **Goal Statement 6 – Water – CC review, discuss next steps**

Tim asked that the introduction add background on water rights, peak demand, and conservation, since to a lay person it might be incomprehensible that Skagit County could run out of water. He also noted that groundwater withdrawals raise issues of saltwater intrusion for island communities, in addition to flow issues for streams. Kim said that we should not take for granted that Skagit water rights are currently controlled by public entities. Kerri noted that demand for water generally peaks when flows are at their seasonal lows, and that the loss of glaciers from climate change will accentuate low flows.

The CC discussed the 2006 report by Hydrologic Services Company on the County's water supply. Tim said that the take home message is that, at some point, there will be a "red line"—when demand exceeds legally available supply. The CC was unsure whether there were plans to update the report, which was commissioned by Skagit County, not the water purveyors. Tim noted that utilities plan for 20 years, not 50 years. He said Skagit PUD's extension of service to Lake Samish residents was an example of not planning for the long-term. Lisa said she would add language to a new draft that stresses the need for water planning to take land use into account.

Jim asked whether current regulations allow the use of grey water for irrigation. Kim asked the same about collecting rainwater for use. Lisa said that for both it was not clear yet. She said that she would revise the section and get it back to the CC for review at its June 30 meeting.

### **Discuss Public Comments**

The CC discussed handouts #11-13b. Kirk agreed to add a new line to the economic vitality section on alternative energy. Grace said she has encountered a lot of resistance to "look-alike" developments, where the buildings are all built at the same time by the same developer. Kirk noted that this does provide cost efficiencies; for a large property, he did not know an alternative. Kerri asked for an appendix that shows images of attractive developments at different densities. Josh said that much proposed development will look like sprawl and will lack elements of community. Kirk said that images of the Preferred Future should be accompanied by images of the Plan Trend for comparison.

Tim related comments from two Mount Vernon mayoral candidates, who both supported greater collaboration and were interested to know how to move the CC's recommendations forward. Cory asked that staff find recommendations in the CC's report where timelines might be added.

Ryan noted the citizen comment in handout #11 that the CC was "disbanding" just as public comments were made on recommendations. Kirk said that he did not anticipate formally reconvening the CC as a group, but that public comment would continue as local governments consider implementing the recommendations. The CC discussed the comment that generic support of "agriculture" could unintentionally support large-scale industrial agriculture operations. CC members noted their support for "diverse" agriculture in the vision statement, and said they did not believe large-scale industrial ag operations would come to dominate the valley. Kirk said that he believed the comment that CC

recommendations were not in sync with the Economic Indicators of Agriculture report related to the report's discussion of critical mass and the CC's recommendation for no net loss of Ag-NRL.

### **Executive Summary**

CC members generally complimented the executive summary as drafted in handout #14. They asked that a new paragraph be added that stresses that the CC is not encouraging growth, and that notes the 14,000 existing development rights in rural and resource zones. This should be followed by emphasis on the 90/10 ratio of urban vs. rural growth, stressing that this benefits both farms and natural systems.

The CC asked that the summary be revised to consistently speak on behalf of the CC itself. CC members also noted that the conclusion was currently written for the June 16 public meeting and should be revised for publication with the final recommendations. Kirk asked CC members to discuss further specific wording changes directly with John.

### **Economic Vitality Section (cont.)**

Kirk presented his edits to the sustainability recommendation for the Economic Vitality section. Some committee members said they thought the recommendation fits better with goals for sustainability than economic vitality. Others said they thought sustainability supports economic vitality, especially since the bulk of the Skagit economy depends on natural resources. Peggy said she would like to review the statement in the context of the overall recommendations for economic vitality. Lisa said staff would provide that. She also said that revised language on in-river fishing would be shared with the committee for review by e-mail.

### **1,600 Acres of Industrial Land – Where?**

Tim said that, as a former airport planner and military pilot, the best location in his opinion for more industry was near the airport. He said this would also provide the benefit of protecting the airport from encroaching residential development. Given the importance of the airport to the local economy, he saw this as an economic benefit itself.

Josh showed a preliminary map of where the port's industrial land inventory had identified existing industrial lands in the county. Much of it is in the floodplain or scattered throughout the county. Most of the rest is near the airport.

Cory said he understood that new industry for the CC's recommended "industrial tax basket" would be located outside of UGAs. Kirk said he also understood that was the concept. Tim said that he would prioritize the area within the current Bayview Ridge UGA, as well as the northwest approach to the airport, for new industrial land.

Referring to handout #15 (Bayview UGA map), Kirk said that the existing zoning around the airport included areas for industrial and residential development. This reflects adopted county policy. New residential development has mostly not occurred because development regulations for large residential projects have not yet been implemented.

Josh said that the Bow Hill area was another possible location for industry, but it is not clear whether that area has the necessary utility service. The airport definitely has the utilities. Tim said he

understands that that the port and the county are not in a position to advocate for a change to current policy. But if the CC recommended the area around the airport for additional industrial land, it could encourage reconsideration of existing zoning and identification of new industrial lands for the future. Josh noted that the CC's current Preferred Future identifies Bayview for about the same amount of urban residential growth as current policy, as reflected in the Plan Trend. He also suggested that industrial development could bring more financing for stormwater improvements than could residential development, which would be important to agriculture.

The CC voted to identify the area around the airport for consideration of additional industrial land. The CC decided against identifying other specific places at this time without knowing specific acreages and how population might need to be moved to accommodate industry.

### **Envision Results**

Josh showed a map of where Envision identified possible replacement lands for Ag-NRL, which were scattered across a wide area. Kirk noted that through GMA planning, the county had identified about double the acreage of Rural Resource-NRL than was ultimately adopted. Many of the lands that "fell out" from this process would be potential Ag-NRL replacement lands.

Josh showed an image he had developed of what additional development under the Preferred Future would look like in the Bay View area. Kirk said he thought the image was more like the Plan Trend.

### **Remaining CC Schedule/Other Business**

Lisa said that further discussion of the potential location of new industrial lands and Ag-NRL replacement lands would be on the agenda for June 30. Other topics include timelines for implementation, carrying capacity (drawing on handouts #16 and 17), the ECONorthwest report on the fiscal implications of increased density (handout #18), an implementation section, and the letter of support requested by TNC.

The CC asked Kirk to draft a letter to the Board of Commissioners in support of the TNC study for CC review. The letter should note how the study could further the CC's open space goals.

Cory said that he was concerned the CC would be seeing the implementation section for the first time. Lisa said staff would send out the full packet to the CC by Friday, to provide time for review.

Kirk said that he would like to add a CD/DVD to the final report, which would include short interviews of CC members. The interviews could potentially be conducted on June 30. Kerri and Peggy said they had found videos with short interviews were very helpful in selling ideas.

Kirk announced that Envision Skagit t-shirts and hats would be given to the CC members in recognition of all their hard work.

To recognize Kirk's own work, Peggy presented him with a framed original cartoon concerning Envision Skagit from the Skagit Valley Herald, with messages of thanks from CC members. Kirk thanked everyone for a team effort.

### **4:30 Adjourn**