

Meeting Notes
Envision Skagit Citizen Committee
June 30, 2011
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Skagit County Commissioners Administrative Building

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

Meeting Handouts:

1. Meeting Notes, June 20 CC meeting (e-mailed)
2. Envision Skagit 2060 Citizen Committee Final Recommendations (6-24-11 draft)
3. Vision Statement edits (6-24-11 draft)
4. Suggested language for Compact Communities Goal Statement 4, item number 7 (Bayview Ridge as potential for industrial land).
5. Suggested language changes provided by Grace Popoff for Section 3 of Goal Statement 4 and new language in Section 7 of Goal Statement 4.
6. Map – “Potential Additional Industrial Lands” (6-27-11)
7. Map – “Potential Agriculture Replacement Lands (5-24-11)
8. Draft – “Implementation Steps and Financial Implications of CC Recommendations” – for CC Consideration.

Committee Business

The committee approved the notes for the June 20 meeting.

Based on the CC’s decision at the June 20 meeting, Kirk will draft a letter from the CC to the Board of County Commissioners encouraging the county to authorize The Nature Conservancy to move forward with the open space feasibility study. Kirk will send the draft letter to the CC by email for review.

The CC discussed the most recent public comments on the draft recommendations.

Kirk noted he had received requests for presentations on the CC’s work from the Skagit Ag Leadership group, the Mount Vernon City Council, and the Burlington Rotary. He will inform CC members of the dates and times for any that want to participate in those presentations.

There was discussion of upcoming sustainable community/ region grant opportunities including federal (HUD) and state (Dept of Commerce) expected in the near future. The CC expressed interest in the county and other partners seeking grant funding to move key recommendations forward, including the Skagit smart growth alliance concept.

Peggy said she recently learned about four federal agencies working together to encourage smart growth activities and will follow-up with a contact in one of those agencies.

Review of Draft Recommendations Document

Economic Vitality: The CC approved the goal statement, with minor edits including:

- Change “Economics” to “Economic vitality” in first sentence
- Staff to complete footnotes
- Correct font issue at bottom of p. 39.
- Add correct name for Skagit Valley College vocational/technical institute, p. 40.

Water: The CC approved the goal statement with minor edits including:

- Add “likely” in 3rd paragraph re: natural supply of surface and groundwater
- Edit paragraph 4 to remove reference to “carrying capacity”
- Add “south Whatcom County” to recommendation #5, p. 34
- The suggestion was made that a definition of sustainable and sustainability be added somewhere to the report [**staff note**: this could be done in a glossary, based on the glossary of terms included in the CC orientation report].

Vision statement: The CC approved the vision statement with removal of the words “citizens of Skagit County” assuming the CC members’ names will be listed directly before the vision statement.

Executive summary: The CC approved the executive summary with minor edits, including:

- Reference to state law requiring counties to plan for growth;
- CC has worked for 10 rather than 9 months;
- 9 rather than 8 goal statements; and
- Stronger encouragement at end for public to get engaged to move the recommendations forward.

Goal Statement 1: The CC approved the goal statement with minor edits:

- Delete 5th bullet under 1A, Regional Coordination, re: assist with development of open space plan;
- In 7th bullet change “decisions” to “recommendations.”
- Change “Envision” to “regional” growth strategy on p. 8, first bullet; check entire document for use of “Envision” to determine if appropriate
- p. 9, change “imminent” to “eminent”

Goal Statement 2: The CC approved the goal statement with minor edits:

- Change 5th bullet in introduction to “Protecting wild lands from sprawl.”
- In 1 a), p. 11, drop “with top priority given to parcels that are 40 acres of greater with current agricultural use.”
- Minor edits to 3 a) iii.
- 3 c), revisions to statement on county roads.
- 4 a) re: doubling funding for Farmland Legacy, rewrite as two sentences.

Goal Statement 3: Approved with minor edits:

- p. 17, #3, add language re: “including a comprehensive watershed-based floodplain management plan...that would inform land use planning.”
- p. 18, #5: superscript footnote notice; capitalize County.

- p. 20, minor edits to bullet on forest land owners: "...to take responsibility to be good stewards over their large share of the middle Skagit watershed."

Goal Statement 4: Approved with edits:

- Introduction, drop "Making" from first bullet (arrow).

The CC had a lengthy discussion regarding the proposed addition of recommendation #7 regarding siting of 1,600 acres of new industrial land at Bayview Ridge, as proposed by Tim. Tim explained that industrial is a better land use than residential adjacent to the airport, for multiple reasons: the airport and pipelines at BVR present a hazard to future residents; and future residents present a political hazard to continued operation and possible expansion of the airport. Siting of additional industrial land takes advantage of proximity to: the airport, existing industrial uses, existing urban infrastructure, close access to highway 20 and I-5, and rail. The recommendation is also consistent with the CC's overall recommendation to concentrate future growth in existing cities.

Gus said he strongly supported the recommendation, based on his experiences in California as a city council member and airport commissioner. Similar support was expressed by all other CC members but Grace.

Grace felt that the committee was being inconsistent regarding hazard issues, specifically its emphasis on airport and pipeline hazards but not similar concerns or emphasis on flood hazards in Burlington. As a result she did not support the proposed recommendation.

Cory said it was incumbent on the CC, in recommending the Industrial Tax Basket concept, to also identify the most suitable place or places for new industrial land.

Josh said based on his review, there were few other places in the county where 1,600 acres of new industrial land could be located. Many other areas with the desired characteristics – access to transportation and urban services – were already fairly heavily built out.

Ryan asked: what would the stormwater and traffic impacts to farm roads be of placing new industrial lands at Bayview Ridge?

The CC (with the exception of Grace) agreed to include the proposed new language as recommendation #7, deleting the final sentence specifying where the BVR population allocation would be reallocated, and adding new language regarding farm roads, wetlands at BVR which might decrease the amount of useable industrial land, and stormwater issues.

The CC also identified several other sections of the recommendations where the recommended location of the 1,600 acres should be mentioned, specifically: with the Industrial Tax Basket proposal, and with the 90/10% population allocation recommendation.

The revised language will be distributed by email to the CC for review.

Goal Statement #5: Approved with minor edits:

- Restore footnote text indicated by *.
- 4 a), minor edits regarding colectivos

- Add a new 4 c) re: establish education and outreach programs to increase awareness of/access to transit options

Ag replacement lands: Josh briefly summarized his search for lands meeting criteria for possible Ag-NRL replacement land. He was able to identify approximately 3,400 acres of land meeting the specified criteria, including being in fairly large blocks. The depiction of those areas is shown in the GIS map provided to the committee [attachment].

Josh said that as with future industrial lands, it's important to act sooner rather than later as additional development will foreclose opportunities to protect those lands. Kirk said a working transfer of development rights program and additional funds for purchase of development rights would be essential to implement those recommendations.

Visuals: The CC discussed what visuals including Envision model graphics should be included in their final report. The following suggestions were made:

- The residential "dot maps" from 1900, 1950, 2010, and Envision projections through 2060, for both the Plan Trend and Preferred scenarios.
- Photos of mixed-use and high quality, small lot development
- Photos of Skagit environmental and natural resource features worth preserving
- Industrial lands and ag replacement lands maps
- Possibly, visuals of projected population growth in the Puget Sound region (1.7 million new people), or visuals of possible future sprawl in Skagit County.

Schedule for completing committee final report: Interim draft to be updated on website following final CC review. Kirk said staff vacations may slow down completion of final report with graphics, with goal being between late July and end of August.

CC requested that formatting be standardized throughout the report, and authorized staff to make non-substantive edits to improve readability.

Conclusion and Implementation sections: The CC expressed concerns with the first section of the proposed Implementation section: it was choppy, technical sounding. CC would like a 1-page conclusion in the same tone as the introduction, highlighting a few key tasks that are important to move forward on quickly.

Second portion of Implementation section should become an appendix written by staff. The CC appeared comfortable with the content as a staff-written product, offering no specific edits or concerns.

CC supports creation and inclusion as an appendix of an "implementation matrix" that will list in table form all specific recommendations, identify responsible parties to move them forward, and whether the action is a near-term, medium-term, or long-term priority.

There was brief discussion of whether the "Skagit Smart Growth Alliance" should be renamed, due to concerns raised by some community members that the name might suggest an affiliation with the existing "smart growth network" in Skagit County. Staff will consider alternatives, possibly including simply the "Skagit Alliance," and share with the CC with the final edits to the recommendations.

Citizen Committee recognition: A small recognition ceremony was held, where the Board of County Commissioners and project staff recognized the Citizen Committee for its hard work and outstanding recommendations. The commissioners provided CC members with framed certificates acknowledging their contributions.

On behalf of the CC, Peggy presented Kirk with the framed original of the Milt Priggee Envision Skagit cartoon, signed by all of the CC members, for which Kirk was very appreciative.

Adjournment:

The meeting formally adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Interested committee members were filmed by TV 21 staff discussing the Envision Skagit process and the committee's recommendations, for inclusion in a video to be used to document and disseminate the Citizen Committee's work.