

Envision Skagit 2060
Steering Committee Meeting Summary
 Skagit Valley College Multi-Purpose Room
 August 11, 2010

Attendance

Members

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| Rebecca Bradley-Lowell, City of Mount Vernon | John Doyle, Town of La Conner | Jan Ellingson, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Exec. |
| Margaret Fleek, City of Burlington | Paul Kriegel, Private Forester | Ryan Larsen, City of Anacortes |
| Sara Young, Port of Skagit County (for Patsy Martin) | Carolyn Kelly, Skagit Conservation District | Rebecca Ponzio, Puget Sound Partnership |
| Margaret Studer, Futurewise | Gary Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services | |

Other Participants:

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| Kirk Johnson, Skagit County | Kendra Smith, Skagit County | Chad Armstrong, Skagit County (intern) |
| Emma Whitfield, Skagit County | Linda Christensen, Skagit County | Lisa Dally Wilson, Dally Environmental |
| John Lombard, Lombard Consulting | | |

9:10 am – Introductions by Kirk

- Mayors and Commissioners will meet on September 1 to discuss committee applicants. When all of the Committee member recommendations are submitted, they will be tallied.
- Thank you to those mayors who have already turned in their Citizen Committee recommendations.

9:15 – Review and Discuss Citizen Committee applicant list.

Steering Committee members were asked to share positive thoughts or comments about the applicants.

SC member:

- Grace Popoff – independent thinker who dives into issues and sees all sides of discussions. Builds consensus, very good at listening, processing information, and bringing people together.
- Kerri Cook – Young, early 30s – Parks Service, Civil Engineering Technician. Has up-river family history that goes very deep. Recommends her strongly.

SC member:

- Doris Robbins – has done a lot of work in the Samish watershed, also worked for her husband’s small business, SC member highly recommends
- Cory Ertel – young, works for SICBA, has practical ideas, helped with Burlington density credit program, good addition

- SC member: Mayor Maxwell interviewed Cory and are comfortable he will be representing himself as a young Anacortes resident, not SICBA representative; Anacortes supports him
- SC member: has worked with Cory, also thinks he can serve on the committee representing himself rather than SICBA, and would be a good addition

SC member:

- John Cheney – has enjoyed working with him in the past. Architect, understands land-use issues, thinks outside the box, has lived in the area for a long time
 - SC member: concerned John Cheney may not consistently show up based on his very poor attendance record with Home Trust of Skagit Board.
- Gus Ramos – SC member has worked with him in the City of Mount Vernon; he would be a good committee member
 - SC member: Gus Ramos is one of only two low-income housing development representatives who applied (other being Jim Meyer). Favorable impression, he has ideas for where we need to be headed on housing issues.
 - SC member: worked with Gus Ramos on the Skagit County Community Agency. Favorable toward his participation.
- Gary Thor: has been very involved in downtown redevelopment, waterfront master plan, would bring a good business-oriented perspective.

SC member:

- Ryan Sakuma and Nate Youngquist – both young and come from good families. Good step forward for them and they will add a valuable, positive perspective. Responsible people who will show up.
 - SC member: Ryan Sakuma involved in local business, has approval from Sakuma Bros. to participate.
 - Kendra: Nate Youngquist wants to become more active and involved. He doesn't sit back and just agree with the consensus, tries to look at the whole picture.

Concern from two SC members and Kendra Smith that there are no private forestry applicants.

- SC member: made efforts to recruit several people but was disappointed and surprised to see none applied. Private sector forester would bring different perspective than agency or park service employee.
- Forestry has been involved through the technical committee and it would be a loss for that voice not to be on Citizen Committee.

Kendra:

- Lack of forestry applicants is not due to lack of interest. They have participated through the technical committee, actually have wanted more opportunity for input into the model, but due to timing and workload factors missed the opportunity to apply. Hopes process can be reopened for a forestry applicant.

SC member:

- County's view is that the 29 applicants are a good pool of candidates to consider. While the Steering Committee may feel that one interest, group, or demographic is missing, it may be problematic to open up the pool to allow more people to apply. In fairness to the process and those who took the time to submit applications, it may be in the best interest to continue with the group that we have.
- The Commissioners should decide how to proceed with this issue.

Lisa Dally Wilson

- Another SC member was unable to attend the meeting, but talked to Lisa and strongly recommended Tim Manns – retired from Park Service, active with conservation groups, also works as tutor with Spanish-speaking kids, has understanding of diverse community issues.

SC member:

- Peggy Flynn – favorable.
- Tim Rosenhan – favorable.
 - SC member: Tim is a former airport manager. Interesting man, would speak as a well-rounded individual of the community. An educator, would speak when needed but would be accepting of others' ideas.

SC member:

- Concerned that there are no applicants from the tribes. It's Important that they are represented as the four tribes have interests in a large part of the watershed. If unable to get tribal representation on the Citizen Committee, the project should look for other ways to encourage tribal involvement – for instance ask them to participate in and present as part of the committee orientation process and field trips.

SC member:

- Has concern that this process may be becoming overly city focused. There are some committee membership gaps but also some heavy concentrations, especially city representation. Doesn't want the process to be overly focused on the cities as its scope is entire watershed.

Kirk: Thank you to those who reached out and asked for participation in the Committee.

9:40 – Brainstorming ideas for Citizen Committee orientation

Lisa: The Citizen Committee will provide recommendations by June and finish by April. Looking for ideas on how to structure the Citizen Committee and how best to work with the group. Current thoughts:

- Field trips – delta, marine shore; Kent-Valley and back up to Skagit Valley; examples of smart-growth alternatives (rural villages)
 - SC member: opposed to the Kent-Valley idea
- Bringing up to speed/Briefing – viewing results from the modeling phase of the project
- Visioning
- Gathering of Citizen Committee and Steering Committee – provide a social night to allow for passing of information and support from the Steering Committee to the Citizen Committee

Ideas:

- SC member:
 - visited farms while on Planning Commission–helped broaden understanding
 - Favorable to the field trips
 - Doesn't think the social night is necessary – may be a waste of time.
- SC member: Once group is selected, perhaps have a fieldtrip or organized talks with Tribal and forestry members as a means of gaining their perspective as they are currently not represented.
- SC member: would be happy to organize a forestry field trip.
- Kirk: concern that the “alternative futures” are exclusive in and of themselves; need to find a way that orientation/field trip activities look at issues in a more holistic way.

- SC member: Hit hot-topic issues (ex. Burlington-Edison School District property issue) to show that there are a lot of competing issues around the County. Have multiple perspectives there to present their viewpoints.
- SC member: It is important that the Committee be *shown* the issues so that they can make up their own minds. Also important that there is someone representing different viewpoints, to show each side of each issue. It's important not to have debates in the field – visit the sites on the field trips and then have the discussions in the meetings.
- SC member:
 - Need to see smart and innovate ways of increasing density. People think of it as only high-rise, but this is not the only way to achieve more compact development. May want to visit other places to see good examples – e.g. in Coupeville, Bellingham.
 - Tribes: Present salmon-restoration work
 - Doesn't see a meeting of Steering and Citizen Committee as just a social time. See it as a time to come together on a mutual, non-cerebral basis to establish a vision based on a common respect for this place. Meetings don't allow people to interact and get to know one another and talk more openly.
 - Kirk: regret that the project didn't ask the Steering Committee upfront: what is your vision of the Skagit future? Agree with a SC member's comment regarding group interaction is important.
- SC member: Agrees high-density issue is something that needs to be addressed; the Citizen Committee needs to see examples of successful, quality projects; but also needs to understand the implications for housing affordability. Some examples cited, such as Issaquah Highlands, are beautiful but very expensive.
- SC member:
 - Likes the idea of tours/workshops.
 - Important to have some kind of orientation before the group is asked to make recommendations.
 - Thinks it will be helpful to witness the Skagit County landscape and other jurisdictions with good examples – Issaquah Heights, Coupeville, etc. – will also present a picture of what Skagit County may become.
 - May be helpful to get aerial views of the landscape (Flight Hawk tours) – aerial views provide a much better perspectives than ground views. May be possible to use GIS mapping services to do a “digital flyover” of certain areas.
 - Presentations that provide “food for thought” – Dr. Robert Lang will likely be presenting in Skagit in October. Very thought-provoking and engaging thinking 50 years out.
- SC member: Need to free people up from their current paradigms to allow for broad understanding of all perspectives. The use of *historical information* allows for this process and perspective so they can understand where we have been and will go.
 - Providing the committee members with “homework” is invaluable. The committee needs to have all the information they can regarding the valley and process they are working on.
 - Provide the committee with the Bill Dietrich essay about the valley
- SC member:
 - Need to achieve balance – If we're going to view one area like Issaquah Highlands, we also need to view other areas – for instance, restoration projects in Snohomish and Thurston Counties that have caused negative effects on farms and drainage.
 - Remember that Leadership Skagit has a different mission than the Citizen Committee – it is important to separate these two groups.

Provide Lisa with projects or processes that had successful ideas of partnerships of interests.

10:15 – Discussion of Citizen Committee draft orientation document

- SC member: Need to step back and separate from the technicalities of the process in order to allow those who are not involved in the process easily understand it.
 - Insert some visuals to provide a quick-picture look at the process
 - Too many acronyms – provide a glossary for the acronyms
 - There are terms that are not defined
 - Format is a problem – difficult to see what is in what section
- Kendra: Liked the document and thought it led into the process very well
- SC member: document needs more pictures, graphics, etc. Overall, however, the document is informative and interesting.
- SC member: thinks it's about the right length – the process has a lot of information but readers can get through it
- SC member: There appears to be a bias. Example: Farming for Wildlife Program – some like it and others do not – in the written orientation, need to recognize that everyone has a bias and need to represent different perspectives. Content exists, but tone of the piece needs work.
 - John Lombard asked that bias issues be flagged so that they can be addressed and fixed.
- SC member: Concern about reconciliation with GMA policies and goals. Citizen Committee needs to be aware of the GMA framework that currently governs us so that the proposed alternatives can work within the allowable framework. We can't ignore that we're governed by GMA so the group should be introduced to the regulations.
 - Kendra: If an alternative doesn't work within the framework of GMA, it doesn't mean that we should drop it. Fear that every presented alternative may only result in small comprehensive plan tweaks due to GMA tweaks which would be a disappointment after three years of creative thinking.
 - GMA needs to be introduced in the draft orientation document
- SC member: Need better numbers to work with regarding economics of forestry as well as agriculture. Will help put a value and perspective on these issues.
 - Kirk and Kendra: the economic issues are quite complex; difficult to address in this report.
 - SC member: This is an orientation document so it is important to avoid technical detail. Perhaps provide more detailed information at a different time.

10:30 – Adjourn

- Next meeting on Wednesday, September 22, 9:00 – 1:00 pm at **Burlington City Hall**
- Model will be up and running at next meeting
- SC member: has a place of interest where the group could get a good view of Skagit Valley – may be a nice place to have lunch, provide history of the hill, and compare it to the Weyerhaeuser development in Snoqualmie.
- Send Kirk or Lisa ideas of projects or processes that had successful ideas of partnerships of interests.