

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON AND SKAGIT COUNTY
PUBLIC HEARING ON SCOPE OF EIS
JANUARY 9, 2014

Commissioner Hearing Room
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

CORPOLONGO & ASSOCIATES
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ORIGINAL

Reported by: Deanna Ellis, CCR

1 4:00 p.m.

2

3 COMMISSIONER DILLON: Hi, I am Commissioner
4 Sharon Dillon. I am one of the three County
5 Commissioners. I'd like to welcome you here today.

6 Hopefully you're here to listen to what is being
7 presented. We want your opinions. Please voice what
8 you have to say and what you want to move forward with.
9 That's why the City of Mount Vernon, there mayor is in
10 the back over there. That's why Skagit County has their
11 people. We want to listen to the people. We want to
12 make sure that your voices are heard.

13 I welcome you here. Thank you all very, very much
14 for coming and have a great night.

15 Thanks.

16 MS. HANSON: Thank you all for being here
17 today. The purpose of today's meeting is to inform the
18 public about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
19 that we have been working on since August. That's
20 looking at the environmental elements and impacts
21 associated with the two sites that have been selected
22 for the jail. Those sites are the Alf Christiansen site
23 and the Truck City site on old 99.

24 So what will happen today is Maggie Buckley with
25 David Evans and Associates -- they are the consulting

1 firm that's been hired by the City and the County to
2 perform the Draft Environmental Impact Statement --
3 she'll be providing an overview of the Draft
4 Environmental Impact Statement. Then we're inviting all
5 of you to come up and make comments on the DEIS. We'd
6 like to limit those comments to three minutes, and those
7 are being recorded by our court reporter here. So those
8 minutes will be available. Probably within two week's
9 time you can contact my office, the City of Mount
10 Vernon, or the County. Gary Christensen, I believe, can
11 be the contact person with the County.

12 Following tonight's meeting, the comment period
13 will be open on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
14 until the 16th of this month. We will then close that
15 and move on into the entitlement process through the
16 City, which includes the rezone and the comprehensive
17 plan amendment for both of those sites. We'll talk more
18 about that during the presentation that Ms. Buckley will
19 give.

20 So any questions, comments, please make those. I
21 will be working on the list that you've all signed up
22 for. I know that not all of you want to speak, but if
23 you would like to, please come up and, again, limit your
24 comments to three minutes.

25 Thank you.

1 MS. BUCKLEY: Good afternoon, everyone. My
2 name is Maggie Buckley. I'm with David Evans and
3 Associates. I supported the City and County on
4 preparation of the Draft EIS for the Skagit County Jail
5 Project.

6 As Jana mentioned, I just want to give you all a
7 brief overview of the project and give a very quick
8 summary of the results of the Draft EIS. I do want to
9 mention that there was some copies of the summary in the
10 Draft EIS on the back table if you'd like to take that
11 for some very exciting, pleasure reading.

12 I do want to keep it brief today because, as Jana
13 mentioned, the reason we're here is to hear from you.
14 Providing ongoing and meaningful public input is one of
15 the primary reasons that we do the SEPA EIS process. So
16 we've done the best that we can to disclose the
17 project's impacts in the Draft EIS in a clear and
18 concise way, and now we want to hear from you. From
19 that point, when we do hear from you, hopefully the City
20 and the County will be able to make the best decision
21 that they can at the end of the day.

22 The purpose of this project is really twofold. In
23 the near term, the purpose is to provide jail
24 infrastructure to accommodate the County over the next
25 15 to 20 years, but we want to look a little further

1 into the planning horizon. In the longer term, the
2 primary purpose of the project is to accommodate the
3 County's needs on a 40 to 50 year planning horizon.

4 Most of you probably already know what the need is
5 for the project. It focuses really on overcrowding at
6 the existing jail. The existing jail was built in 1984
7 to accommodate only 83 inmates. It was expanded in the
8 80s and early 90s to accommodate 180 inmates, but today
9 the average daily population is somewhere around 263.
10 Projections show that could get up to over 400 by the
11 year 2040.

12 So the proposed project is to construct a jail in
13 two phases. The first and initial phase would be a
14 100,000 square foot facility with 400 inmate beds and
15 some facilities to support that. The second phase or
16 what we call "full build out" is to accommodate that
17 longer 40- to 50-year planning horizon that I mentioned.
18 That would be 155,000 square foot facility with an
19 additional 400 beds to provide total of 800 inmate beds.

20 The County considered a total of 14 sites for a new
21 jail. Through their alternatives evaluation process,
22 they really whittled it down to two sites which are
23 evaluated in the Draft EIS, and that process is
24 summarized in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS, if you want
25 more detail.

1 The first is the Alf Christiansen Seed site. That
2 is located just south of Kincaid Street and north of
3 union and sits in between the railroad and I-5. The
4 site itself is represented by that red boundary there,
5 and it's about 7.8 acres in size and is comprised of
6 pieces of 21 different parcels.

7 The second site is the Truck City, Suzanne Lane
8 Site, and that's located in south Mount Vernon -- again,
9 shown in red there. It's about 10.4 acres in size and
10 is comprised of five different parcels.

11 The Draft EIS also evaluates a third alternative,
12 and that's what we call the "no action alternative."
13 We're required to evaluate that under SEPA. What that
14 means for this project is that a jail would not be
15 constructed, so the County would continue to use the
16 existing jail as they do today.

17 I do want to mention, the Jail Coordinating Counsel
18 unanimously agreed that a new jail was needed for the
19 County, and County residents really supported that
20 sentiment when they approved the increase in the sales
21 tax to construct a new jail. So this alternative, while
22 we have to evaluate it, isn't really a viable, long-term
23 solution to address the overcrowding issue. So if this
24 alternative were selected, some other action would
25 likely need to be taken by the County. We don't know

1 what the action would look like to address the
2 overcrowding issue.

3 The Draft EIS looks at eight different elements of
4 the environment. The first seven that are listed there
5 are pretty standard for an EIS document. I do want to
6 point out, though, that the eighth one, economics is
7 somewhat atypical. We added that after the result of
8 the public scoping period. We heard from you all that
9 you were concerned with potential impacts on property
10 values, potential impacts on tax revenues and more
11 general economic impacts to businesses in the city
12 limits, especially in the downtown area. As a result of
13 that, the City and the County decided to add that
14 element to the EIS.

15 So alternative impacts, this is the exciting stuff.
16 So of the eight elements that we analyzed, five of those
17 really had similar impacts between the two site
18 alternatives, so I want to run through those pretty
19 quickly.

20 The first is geology and soils. The conditions on
21 both sites do create some potential for settlement
22 hazardous, and that issue would be addressed primarily
23 through the design of the jail, the foundation type and
24 through the construction methodology.

25 Floodplains, both sites are located within the

1 hundred-year floodplain. To comply with City Code, the
2 jail would need to be constructed above the base flood
3 elevation.

4 Hazardous materials, we know that current and past
5 uses on both of these sites really create a potential to
6 encounter contaminated soils, underground storage tanks,
7 or asbestos. Additional investigations are recommended
8 to further evaluate that. If some contamination is
9 found in those investigations, it would need to be
10 removed prior to moving forward with construction.

11 For cultural resources, there is still a
12 possibility -- although we didn't find anything when we
13 surveyed the two sites, it was somewhat of a limited
14 survey -- we think that there is still some potential to
15 encounter archaeological resources. So, again, we're
16 going to do some additional investigations on either
17 site, and we'll address that issue further.

18 Transportation, our analysis shows that a new jail
19 would generate up to 34 new vehicle trips in the p.m.
20 peak hour, which is a fairly minor amount of traffic in
21 the overall transportation system. Some off-site
22 improvements would be required at either site to comply
23 with City Code. Specifically at the time Alf
24 Christiansen Seed Site, those improvements would depend
25 on what the access configuration is there which hasn't

1 been determined yet.

2 I'll move onto the remaining three elements of the
3 environment that did have some greater differences
4 between the two sites. Aesthetically, a new jail on
5 either site would have fairly minor changes on visual
6 quality, but at the Alf Christiansen Seed Site we did
7 determine that a new jail would be somewhat inconsistent
8 with the visual character that's envisioned for the
9 downtown area and Kincaid Street, specifically, since
10 it's a planned gateway into the downtown area.

11 To address that issue, we've recommended some
12 modifications to the project design, such as
13 incorporating an outdoor space or some public art on the
14 site and also complying with the design guidelines that
15 are in the Waterfront and Downtown Master Plan.

16 Economics, so our analysis basically focused on
17 what type of a development could occur on either site if
18 we didn't build a jail there. Based on the current
19 market conditions at the Alf Christiansen Seed Site,
20 that alternative development was defined as a mixed use
21 development with some commercial and retail uses. At
22 the Truck City Site, that looks more like a business
23 park. The real difference between the two, from an
24 impact perspective, is the quantity of potentially lost
25 revenue. So if we build a jail at either site, that

1 alternative development scenario is lost. From a fiscal
2 standpoint, that looks like \$86 million a year in gross
3 business receipts for the mixed use development on the
4 Alf Christiansen Seed Site and 220 jobs versus the Truck
5 City Site -- it's somewhat lower -- \$17 million in gross
6 business receipts per year and 112 jobs.

7 And finally for land use, a new jail at the Truck
8 City site is generally consistent with the City's land
9 use plans. At the Alf Christiansen Seed Site, there are
10 some specific goals that are identified in the City's
11 Downtown Waterfront Master Plan focused on providing
12 more of a mixed used, commercial, retail-type
13 developments in the downtown area. And so to
14 accommodate that and to address those goals we've
15 recommended a few different things to modify the project
16 design, such as incorporating a pedestrian pathway on
17 the site which would connect the northern and southern
18 uses. As I mentioned before, anethetics, incorporate
19 some, potentially, public art or an outdoor space to try
20 and enhance Kincaid Street as the gateway to downtown.

21 So we are here because we want to know what you
22 think. There are three different ways that you can
23 comment. The first is by providing a statement tonight
24 in front of the court reporter. If you feel more
25 comfortable writing your thoughts down, you can just

1 fill out a comment form and leave it in the box on the
2 back table. If you'd like to think about things a
3 little more, you can provide comments to the City by
4 next Thursday at 5 p.m., which is the close of the
5 comment period.

6 And I do want to just reassure you that tonight is
7 not the last opportunity to provide public input on this
8 project. In terms of SEPA, we'll be wrapping the
9 process up here in the next month or two. We will
10 address all the comments that are received during the
11 comment period, and we'll issue a Final EIS in the next
12 one to two months. So that will wrap things up for
13 SEPA. Then we'll move into the land use permitting
14 process this spring, and that's needed to change the
15 comprehensive plan and zoning designation on either site
16 to a public use which would accommodate a new jail.

17 And then from there we'll move into the essential
18 public facilities permitting process. We expect that
19 that will happen this coming summer. Both of those
20 final two processes have open record public hearings, so
21 those are two additional opportunities that you can
22 voice your opinion on the project. There are some
23 handouts on the back table about those two processes, if
24 are you are interested.

25 So that does it for me. From here, we'll open it

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1 up for public statements. Please remember when you come
2 up you have three minutes to provide a statement.
3 Please state your full name and address. We look
4 forward to hearing from you.

5 MS. HANSON: So I have a Ron Coakley.

6 MR. COAKLEY: I'm good.

7 MS. HANSON: Bill Valder. Lori Coppenrath.
8 I'm sorry, I can't read the fourth name. Dahl, Sonya
9 Dahl.

10 MS. DAHL: I didn't sign up to speak tonight.

11 MS. HANSON: Oh, okay. I'm just reading off
12 the sign-up sheet.

13 Balisa Koetje.

14 MS. KOETJE: Hello. So where do we want the
15 jail?

16 My name is Balisa Koetje. I'm a commercial real
17 estate broker with Windermere Commercial Real Estate in
18 Mount Vernon. I have worked in the profession of
19 commercial finance and commercial real estate for the
20 past 30 years.

21 In regards to the two jail sites under review,
22 professionally, my husband, Jim Koetje and I, represent
23 the Truck City Site in south Mount Vernon. However,
24 personally we own and have owned many buildings in
25 downtown Mount Vernon. Professionally, we've sold

1 dozens of downtown buildings, including four within the
2 last six months and at least tens of thousands of square
3 feet.

4 Some may say our interest is professionally driven
5 due to our representation of the Truck City Site. It
6 goes way beyond this relationship. The issue is not why
7 we want the jail to be located in south Mount Vernon at
8 the Truck City Site, but rather why we do not want the
9 jail located at the Alf Christiansen Site, the entrance
10 to downtown Mount Vernon.

11 Some information. In 2008, the City of Mount
12 Vernon adopted a master plan for downtown Mount Vernon
13 and the waterfront. Along with dedicating \$27.3 million
14 to the waterfront revitalization, this plan identified
15 11 opportunity sites for new developments. The Alf
16 Christiansen Site is identified as the largest
17 opportunity site in downtown Mount Vernon.

18 According to the environmental impact statement,
19 real estate appraisers and brokers, this site is some of
20 the most valuable real estate in downtown, with
21 potential for large development, hotel, office park,
22 mixed use, retail and restaurant. This would generate a
23 property tax and a sales tax to help support the City
24 and County; hence, the jail, the schools,
25 transportation, hospital, court district.

1 So what does this mean? According to the
2 Environmental Impact Statement, the report that's just
3 been completed, if the Alf Christiansen Site is allowed
4 to be developed privately and not as a jail, it's
5 estimated to generate \$587,000 in annual tax revenue and
6 \$85 million in gross business receipts. If the Truck
7 City Site jail is developed privately and not as a jail,
8 it is estimated to generate \$145,000 in annual tax
9 revenue and \$16 million in gross business receipts.

10 For this economic reason alone, the jail should be
11 built on the Truck City Site in south Mount Vernon. A
12 jail in south Mount Vernon will also generate traffic
13 which will hence the development of other businesses in
14 south Mount Vernon.

15 I have present with me today letters from the
16 downtown Mount Vernon association and from the Chamber
17 of Commerce, from the Commercial Brokerage Association
18 which is commercial real estate brokers from Whatcom,
19 Snohomish, and Skagit County that do business in our
20 area. They are all in great concern of having the jail
21 downtown as a welcome into the downtown community. A
22 couple of quotes:

23 "Downtown Mount Vernon is formally recognized as a
24 top tier Main Street Community, one of only 13 across
25 our state. We are concerned the jail could become a

1 doorstep to our community," Mount Vernon Downtown
2 Association.

3 "Aesthetically, what is there about a county jail
4 that says 'Welcome to Mount Vernon?' We are investing
5 millions in revitalizing our riverfront. Let's be smart
6 about our front door as well," Jim Scott owner of
7 Windermere Real Estate.

8 Ladies and gentleman, we have two choices for our
9 sites. Why would you choose the Alf Christiansen Site
10 when building a jail there and removing it from the tax
11 rolls takes away a tremendous economic benefit to our
12 community. Tax revenue of \$587,000, almost four times
13 higher than the Truck City Site, would be generated
14 under private development. Estimated gross business
15 receipts of \$86 million. Over five times higher than
16 Truck City site would be generated under private
17 development.

18 If you choose the Alf Christiansen Site for the
19 jail, you'll eliminate a much greater stream of revenue
20 for the City, the County, the school district, the
21 transportation district, hospital districts, and court
22 district. This is our community. The City of Mount
23 Vernon is committed to the revitalization of downtown
24 and the waterfront. Investors and business owners are
25 excited about downtown Mount Vernon. Make the correct

1 choice and add to this economic growth. Select the
2 truck site for the jail, and leave the Alf Christiansen
3 Site for private development.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. HANSON: Kristen Keltz. Sheila
6 McCandlish.

7 MS. MCCANDLISH: I thought I was just signing
8 in.

9 MS. HANSON: Ellen Camson

10 MS. CAMSON: What she said.

11 MS. HANSON: Donna Toeffer. Mary Ruth Holder.

12 MR. CHRISTENSEN: When the three minute time
13 period is up, I'm just going to give you a little hand
14 signal. So I'll just -- in respect to others who may
15 want to comment, if you can keep your comments to three
16 minutes, we'd greatly appreciate that. If there is time
17 left over at the end, then we can allow more time.

18 MS. HOLDER: Okay. My name is Mary Ruth
19 Holder. I live at 1319 Digby Place in Mount Vernon, and
20 I'll be -- I'm submitting more detailed comments in
21 writing, but I wanted to make at least a brief oral
22 summary statement.

23 First of all, I really want to thank you for
24 providing information to the public about this really
25 important decision to pick a site for a much needed, new

1 jail and for allowing the public to provide public
2 comments to you.

3 The EIS process and this hearing demonstrate a
4 welcome to the public willingness to have an open and
5 transparent decision making process. This is the way
6 our Government should work and should continue to work
7 in this case.

8 My husband, Philip and I retired to Skagit Valley
9 nearly nine years ago. Of the places we could live here
10 in the valley, we chose to live in Mount Vernon because
11 of the beautiful and unique historic downtown. Mount
12 Vernon's pedestrian friendly downtown is where we do the
13 bulk of our shopping, including just today and other
14 business, and we walk there nearly daily, and we conduct
15 our errands there and meet friends there at restaurants
16 and so forth.

17 We really value the City of Mount Vernon's
18 considerable efforts to complete its Downtown and
19 Waterfront Master Plan and the hard work and growing
20 success by the City, our Downtown Association, and Mount
21 Vernon Chamber of Commerce to insure that downtown Mount
22 Vernon has a vibrant and growing downtown economy for
23 the long term.

24 Siting a new jail, in this case, is not like what
25 you think of or I think of as the usual development,

1 where there may be raw land available because the rural
2 sites have already been eliminated. Instead, this
3 presents an unusual case of dropping what is anticipated
4 ultimately to be an 800-bed jail that would have the
5 same footage as a Walmart super center into Mount
6 Vernon's existing commercial enterprise area.

7 The Draft EIS demonstrates significant adverse
8 impacts, as you just heard, that this would have
9 particularly on the City's economy, tax revenues, and
10 also land use, and indirect impacts on the
11 transportation system, and even aesthetics if a large,
12 new jail were to be located at the City's front door
13 step; that is, at the Alf Christiansen Site. The
14 impacts would be considerably less significant at the
15 Truck City Site.

16 As you know, Mount Vernon's Downtown Comprehensive
17 Plan and its Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan
18 contemplate a different use of the Alf Christiansen
19 Site; that is, a private commercial development to
20 compliment and enhance our downtown's growth and
21 prosperity.

22 I urge the County to respect the City of Mount
23 Vernon's vision for the development of the Alf
24 Christiansen Site, as articulated in the City's plans,
25 and to allow the City to proceed with its plans,

1 particularly in light of the fact that there is a
2 perfectly viable alternative, and that is Truck City.

3 Therefore, I recommend the Truck City alternative
4 for the new jail site.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. HANSON: Mark Semrau. Steve Olson. Paul
7 Taylor. Jim Carter.

8 MR. TAYLOR: My name is Paul Taylor. I live
9 at 20388 Eric Street, Mount Vernon. I'm an attorney.
10 I'm also a commercial real estate broker. I just
11 recently opened up a new company.

12 I'm not representing anybody. I have no vested
13 interest in either property. I live south of Mount
14 Vernon, and I'm here to tell you my personal, opinion
15 based on my background and experience, of why the Alf
16 Christiansen Site is probably far superior than the
17 south Mount Vernon Site.

18 First of all, I would like to point out that there
19 is already a jail in downtown Mount Vernon. So what we
20 are doing is moving a facility over to another portion.

21 Second thing is it's been pointed out that this is
22 the gateway to Mount Vernon. So what's there right now?
23 We have a rail station with inadequate parking. We have
24 court houses and administrative buildings, and then we
25 have a vacant industrial site.

1 Now, does that sound like it's really well planned
2 and we've got something going for us? I don't think so.

3 As far as the site being used as a business park or
4 a hotel, I'd like to find out what hotel would like to
5 put a building right there and who would like to stay in
6 it.

7 As far as business park, I have worked and rented
8 from the Skagit I-5 Business Park which is south of
9 town, and it's half vacant right now. If you build more
10 business parks, they'll be vacant. So I don't think
11 that's a viable use. The Alf Christiansen property has
12 been up for sale for years, and it hasn't sold. That
13 should tell you something.

14 Now, what about the site itself for what it's used
15 for? Well, I've been going to the courthouse for the
16 last 30 years, and I see inmates brought in on time.
17 They walk right across the street from the current jail.
18 Now, those same inmates are going to have to be brought
19 up from downtown. They're going to take parking spaces,
20 and they're gonna take time. Is that a good use? I
21 don't think so. There is a better use for south Mount
22 Vernon, a lot better uses.

23 I have a little experience in that. If some of you
24 will note, the Cascade Mall in Burlington and the
25 Factory Outlet mall in Burlington and that whole

1 commercial strip, well, I presented that plan to the
2 City of Burlington in 1980 as part of my Master's
3 Program from Arizona State University. That turned out
4 pretty good for the City of Burlington. Now, some
5 people may hate that. But in reality, it worked out.
6 They have a really big tax base.

7 The same thing could be done for south Mount Vernon
8 if you sit down and plan it well and not put up mixed
9 uses down in south Mount Vernon. It has good freeway
10 access. It could be a real gold mine for the City of
11 Mount Vernon, if you plan it right. That's what we
12 should be planning now, not to put the jail down there.
13 Once you put a jail down there, do you think anybody
14 else is gonna want to build anything on those vacant
15 lots? I don't think so.

16 Anyway, I've put my comments in a written -- which
17 I will submit, and I'm done, so thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Jim Carter.

19 MR. CARTER: My name is Jim Carter. I live at
20 4223 Lupine Drive in Mount Vernon. I wasn't actually
21 going to say anything here. I have prepared a
22 presentation to send to Jana, but having heard some of
23 the comments tonight, I decided that I better say what I
24 think.

25 One of the things -- I'll point to Ruth and say,

1 Ruth, I'm in total agreement with you. I think that we
2 should be developing the Truck City Site for the jail.

3 The economic impacts -- I have been watching very
4 closely for the last four or five years the downtown
5 revitalization effort, and it's coming beautifully Jana,
6 thank you. I think that if we put the jail downtown, it
7 will ruin most of the work that we have been after.
8 Looking at the statistics and the economic impacts of
9 it, I am totally in support of the jail going south.

10 So that's it. Thank you.

11 MS. HANSON: Glen Johnson.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I'm Glen Johnson. I live
13 at 20482 Skagit City Road, Mount Vernon. I'm a
14 proponent of the Christiansen Seed Site partly because I
15 know the site intimately well having worked there
16 throughout the 80s and time before that also. The loss
17 of the short-term monies from the business development
18 can be made up for in the recycling of that present
19 facility.

20 Now, one of the major concerns that is brought up
21 here is about geology and soils. Compressible soils
22 create settlement hazardous. Well, there is a facility
23 that has been built there and has been existing and has
24 done its settling. It has its elevation above
25 floodplain. The seed storage warehouse at the

1 Christiansen Seed Site, relatively new, extremely solid,
2 extremely settled already, could house 200 inmates in a
3 month or two if we decided to put use to something
4 that's an existing facility rather than raising it and
5 build something from new.

6 I figure that realistically recycling the
7 Christiansen Seed Site could create a huge economic
8 driver for the community by training inmates to no
9 longer visit our jails, using the facility rather than
10 just to incarcerate but to "tough love" them back into
11 the workforce. Rather than using our own resources to
12 incarcerate our own community members, we could be like
13 Snohomish or Yakima hiring ourselves out to others for
14 holding their inmates which would be an income provider
15 to the County and the City as a potential use.

16 A mixed use is totally possible on not a 7.8 acre
17 site that was listed here tonight but a
18 nine-point-something acre site which is really what that
19 place encompasses. Some of that is being tossed off for
20 fear that it's more of a liability than an asset in this
21 conversation. But the casting off of some of those
22 parcels are parcels that are totally commercial
23 properties that could be totally developed.

24 I want to specifically use inmate labor to do a
25 manufacturing process, and thus having the County

1 receive the rewards for that manufacturing done by labor
2 that -- I've been burgled. I didn't get my monies back
3 from the burgle. The burglar got away with paying me
4 \$12 worth of restitution. I'm a taxpayer that wants
5 some restitution from our criminal element. And if that
6 means us using their labor to manufacture something that
7 the City and the County gets to reap a profit from, I'm
8 all for it. Because as it is right now, we're not
9 forcing the inmates to step up to their responsibility
10 as a criminal. We have to remember that we're expending
11 millions of dollars to incarcerate a criminal, not
12 somebody who's an active participant in the economy.
13 I'm wanting to turn them into an economic driver where
14 they no longer come back to our jails ever again once
15 they're in our jail once.

16 MS. HANSON: Rebecca Schlaht?

17 MS. SCHLAHT: No.

18 MS. HANSON: Barbara Busby.

19 MS. BUSBY: Pass.

20 MS. HANSON: Jack Cross.

21 MR. CROSS: I'll pass.

22 MS. HANSON: Tamara Thomas. Phyllis McKeehen.

23 MS. MCKEEHEN: My name is Phyllis McKeehen.

24 My address is 12576 Josh Wilson Road, Mount Vernon.

25 I'm looking at the alternative sites from two

1 perspectives. One is from a person who worked in the
2 past, for 20 years, in the Skagit County Justice System
3 and was a member of the original jail commission -- many
4 meetings involved with that.

5 The other perspective is almost 50 years of coming
6 to downtown Mount Vernon. My access is primarily, for
7 the most part, heading south on I5, and then west on
8 Kincaid Street.

9 We have in the jail two separate populations. We
10 have those that are convicted of crimes that are serving
11 time. We have those that are accused of crimes that
12 still have to go to trial with a sentence, if one
13 happens to be determined. The taxpayers cost to deal
14 with those two separate populations in the jail is about
15 -- is going to be about the same for those that are
16 serving a sentence whether the jail is located in
17 downtown Mount Vernon or whether the jail is located at
18 the Truck City Site. As taxpayers, though, we cannot
19 afford the increased cost that will be involved to the
20 Criminal Justice System if the jail is in south Mount
21 Vernon.

22 When you have a trial, you have to bring the person
23 from the jail to the courthouse. There will be one
24 courtroom in the new jail, but that is not going to be
25 adequate for all of the trials.

1 Between Truck City and downtown Mount Vernon, there
2 is a railroad track. When you're transporting a person
3 from jail to town, you've got the cost of staff time and
4 benefits for the deputy or deputies that's bringing the
5 person to the courthouse. You've got the transportation
6 costs, the vehicle update, the maintenance, the cost of
7 gas. When you compound by the number of people,
8 particularly where we're looking at a jail that's
9 talking about 400 inmates, there is going to be a heck
10 of a lot of cost to get people from jail to downtown.

11 While we don't know whether we're going to have a
12 coal offloading facility in Whatcom County -- the
13 concern about increased train traffic -- we do know
14 currently underway in the City of Anacortes is the
15 expansion of the facilities at both refineries for the
16 increased crude oil train traffic that's going to occur.

17 There is going to be a lot of times, if we're
18 bringing people from the jail to downtown Mount Vernon
19 from the Truck City Site, that we're going to have an
20 increased cost because somebody is waiting for the train
21 to get out of the way so that they can go forward.
22 That's adding for the cost of transport and has to be
23 factored into economics.

24 From the aesthetic standpoint, I think credit has
25 to go where credit is due. The County has been very

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1 good at having aesthetically pleasing buildings. They
2 have maintained the grounds. Frankly, they're doing a
3 better job than about 95 percent of the existing
4 businesses that are located in downtown Mount Vernon. I
5 think an aesthetic addition to the community is going to
6 occur. Our architects, give them credit. They're good.
7 I think it will look much better and be much more
8 economically benefited to the community if it's in
9 downtown Mount Vernon.

10 MS. HANSON: Margaret Fleek.

11 MS. FLEEK: Margaret Fleek, Burlington
12 Planning Department. We did submit written comments on
13 the Draft EIS. It was a very thorough job. I think
14 they did a really hard look at everything and the
15 details, but this is our regional historic downtown. It
16 has a huge future, and we need to preserve it for
17 downtown. We need to have that jail down at the Alf
18 Christiansen Seed Site. They'll have -- they've got
19 video. They've got courtrooms. They've got no problem
20 with access for the prisoners, but we need to have our
21 history maintained and preserved and expanded on. This
22 is one of the center pieces of our region.

23 I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you
24 very much, and good job.

25 MS. HANSON: Tom Sicklesteel.

1 MR. SICKLESTEEL: My name is Tom Sicklesteel.
2 My address is 10121 Sicklesteel Lane. We have about 20
3 acres along Cedardale. We're in business down there, a
4 little crane company.

5 What I wanted to talk about was the economic
6 impact. While I think talking about alternatives in a
7 possibility scenario -- there's some real economic
8 impacts that are here and now and costs that could be
9 impacting based on this decision that we could actually
10 measure and we can actually deal with in the here and
11 now instead of the potential and the possibility and the
12 probabilities which may or may not ever occur.

13 For instance, in the corridor -- and all I'm going
14 to address in this is Truck City's Site because that's
15 all I really know. That I5 corridor is an industrial
16 corridor. The industrial corridor is filled with
17 trucking companies, and it's filled with also a
18 Department of Transportation oversized vehicle station
19 where you can get permits.

20 When the Skagit bridge was wiped out and oversized
21 loads had to be stopped and curfewed, they parked in
22 south Mount Vernon. They parked all along the I5 -- the
23 Truck City place and along the roads there, and that
24 sort of stuff. The reason they are doing that is the
25 routes on and off the freeway and the routes to a fuel

1 station is the only one in the County outside of Cook
2 Road. The next one is south, down at Donna's truck stop
3 in Marysville.

4 So what does that mean for my company? My cranes
5 cannot fuel at the fuel station that's like 300 feet up
6 the road from me. I have to go to Truck City in order
7 to turn the cranes around and cycle through there. If
8 that's closed, my cranes now have to go up to Cook Road
9 or down to Donna's. If we do that, we pay about \$10 per
10 mile for the pleasure of going down the freeway. That
11 can easily wind up \$500 per trip just to fuel the crane.
12 That would be a huge economic impact for us.

13 There is a number of trucking companies and heavy
14 haul companies that use that area for those purposes.
15 That's what it was intended for. That's why the City of
16 Mount Vernon sought it so hard when they incorporated it
17 a while back. I understand about economics and economic
18 impact, but I think comparing probabilities and
19 possibilities versus the here and now is not
20 appropriate.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. HANSON: Patty Smith.

23 MS. SMITH: My name is Patty Smith. I live at
24 6184 West Edison Lane in Bow, Washington.

25 I'm one of the owners of Truck City, and I would

1 just like to say that if the jail is not built down
2 there, it probably will not be a truck stop. I just
3 wanted that known. If you take out of fact that I own
4 one of the sites, I look at it purely from common sense.
5 It makes more common sense to build it down at Truck
6 City than it does at Alf Christiansen. You're getting
7 way more land. You're not putting yourself in a small
8 space where you're going to need to get more land later
9 on down the road. You keep your downtown core intact.
10 Those people all really don't want it down there. It's
11 your whole downtown. If you don't have a downtown with
12 all your independent business, you don't have an old
13 town downtown. Sorry. I don't speak well in front of
14 people.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. HANSON: Jerry Dodd.

17 MR. DODD: Just was signing in.

18 MS. HANSON: Charlie Wend.

19 MR. WEND: Just signing in.

20 MS. HANSON: Brian Clark.

21 MR. CLARK: I'd like to come at the end.

22 MS. HANSON: Craig Cammock.

23 MR. CAMMOCK: Craig Cammock, 227 Freeway
24 Drive. To be right up front, I'm an attorney. My firm
25 has represented Alf Christiansen since the last 70s.

1 I'm also a downtown business owner/downtown property
2 owner, downtown shopper, big time downtown eater. My
3 thoughts are the same regardless of the fact that Alf
4 Christiansen is a client.

5 The worst thing that ever happen to downtown Mount
6 Vernon was the County pulling out the administrative
7 offices, moving them here on Continental Place. If you
8 look around the room, there's a lot of people in this
9 room that will spill out on the streets when this
10 meeting is done. Wouldn't it be great if they were
11 dumping out into downtown Mount Vernon right at dinner
12 time? Well, they're not because the County is here now.

13 The jail, as currently configured, has 75 full-time
14 employees and will expand to 136 employees at full
15 capacity. That's 136 employees to the employee base of
16 Mount Vernon that will disappear to south Mount Vernon.
17 At shifts end, they'll get in their car. It will be
18 just as easy to go to Burlington or home as it will be
19 to downtown Mount Vernon. Downtown Mount Vernon needs
20 the employee base that's represented by the jail and the
21 facilities, auxiliary services, staff and personnel that
22 goes with it.

23 There is other problems or rather advantages to the
24 Alf Christiansen Site. Beginning with the floodwall,
25 Mount Vernon, the taxpayers are investing \$30 million in

1 a floodwall to protect critical facilities, critical
2 downtown and future developments. It makes no sense to
3 build a \$60 million jail on top of floodplain and not
4 protect it by our \$30 million investment in the
5 floodwall.

6 The jail is also a critical facility. This means
7 that it needs access 24/7, 365 days a year. The EIS
8 glossed over the fact that in the floodplain we'll lose
9 access to the jail. Simply, the EIS states, well, with
10 the advanced flood warning, the jail can stock up on
11 supplies and ride out the high water until it goes down.
12 I've seen Lord of the Flies. I know what happens when
13 you cut out the jail. There's riots. There's medical
14 needs. You need access to and from the jail. It's
15 wishful thinking to say, they'll ride it out with a pile
16 of food in the back room.

17 Safety is also an issue. The EIS knows notes that
18 the south Mount Vernon property is at high risk of --
19 and earthquake. Alf Christiansen is medium risk. One
20 thing we know we are going to have in this area are
21 earthquakes and floods. The Alf Christiansen Site is
22 better in both regards.

23 As for appearance, the property is currently a
24 rundown warehouse. The best thing that could happen in
25 City of Mount Vernon, to the extent you can even see the

1 Alf Christiansen Property when you enter Mount Vernon,
2 is to have it redeveloped into an attractive new
3 facility, such as the jail we already have that does not
4 drive away business in the City of Mount Vernon.

5 As for redevelopment, you have to understand the
6 difficulties of developing the Alf Christiansen Site.
7 It's sandwiched between the railroad and the freeway.
8 You can stack traffic for the turn signal. The only
9 access is right, right out only. That means no hotel,
10 no restaurant, no business wants to access off of that
11 because there is no practical access from the freeway.

12 Can you imagine going into your hotel and they ask
13 you, do you want the railroad view room or the freeway
14 view room. It's too noisy. It's too crowded, and the
15 access is too bad for viable redevelopment.

16 Over the course of our representation of Alf
17 Christiansen, I've become familiar with the number of
18 people that have been interested in the property, which
19 is few and far between. The interest has been this:
20 pickle storage from a now bankrupt company, a climbing
21 wall, an espresso stand, and used as a warehouse. None
22 of them materialized. That's the extent of interest
23 that has occurred for that property. None of it is
24 real. None of it is viable.

25 The relocation of the jail to the Alf Christiansen

1 Site would be a benefit to the City of Mount Vernon, as
2 recognized by Alf Christiansen which substantially
3 discounted the appraised value of the property to move
4 it because they know there is no other viable
5 alternative.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. HANSON: Kathleen Bisagna.

8 MS. BISAGNA: No.

9 MS. HANSON: Brian Clark.

10 MR. CLARK: My name is Brian Clark. I office
11 at 227 Freeway Drive, Mount Vernon, Washington. I lived
12 in the immediate Mount Vernon area for nearly 30 years
13 with my family before relocating some 20 miles north. I
14 reside 866 Autumn Lane. I'm a partner of Craig Cammock.
15 Like Craig, we've represented the Seed Company since
16 1979. At least, I have. Prior to that, my firm
17 represented them probably for 40 years.

18 I'm an owner of commercial property in downtown
19 Mount Vernon. My family has owned property in downtown
20 Mount Vernon for 60 years or more. I have looked at
21 some of the economic projections contained in the EIS.
22 I think they are extremely over optimistic, as far as
23 redevelopment of the existing Alf Christiansen Seed
24 site. I think my partner, Craig Cammock went into the
25 discussion in detail relative to the limitations of that

1 site in terms of access and the fact that it's
2 sandwiched between I5 and the railroad track.

3 I have a concern about the relocation of services
4 in downtown Mount Vernon, the movement of administrative
5 offices from the present County core, that this is just
6 part of that trend with the movement of the Criminal
7 Justice Center from the existing site to the extreme
8 south Mount Vernon. We have the administrative offices
9 and other County divisions here, out here on Continental
10 Place, the two extreme sites. That doesn't do anything
11 for the downtown Mount Vernon core in terms of potential
12 patrons for businesses and services and the like.

13 I, professionally and personally, feel that the
14 best site for the jail, in terms of immediate spin off,
15 is the Alf Christiansen Seed Company Site. Truck City,
16 I think, imposes some additional costs, as we've heard
17 from several of the speakers already, in terms of
18 transportation. It makes no sense to me for the City of
19 Mount Vernon to spend \$30 million on a floodwall to
20 encapsulate the downtown Mount Vernon area and not
21 provide that protection to a new Criminal Justice Center
22 or jail.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. HANSON: And Brian, my apologies. There
25 are a few more names.

1 John Mitzel.

2 MR. MITZEL: My name is a John Mitzel. I live
3 at 2703 River Vista Loop in Mount Vernon. I am a
4 commercial real estate broker with Windermere out of
5 Whatcom County, live in Mount Vernon.

6 In all disclosure, I represent two of the owners of
7 property that is called the Truck City Site. I have got
8 some questions that are a little more specific. I
9 support what Balisa has said 100 percent, and I have
10 some other clarifications I'd like to share.

11 1. The questions I've got have to do with the
12 cost of development of the two sites. Which site, based
13 on the information available, including in the EIS, are
14 the most cost affective? Does that include the
15 anticipated off-site costs? Does it include the cost of
16 property owned by the City of Mount Vernon? Which site
17 has the most unknowns which could add developments cost?

18 2. Which site based on information available
19 included in the EIS would have the fastest development
20 schedule including completion of off-site work,
21 beginning with the development of site engineering
22 drawings? Which site gives a design team the most
23 flexibility to include any desired changes that may come
24 up during the design phase of the project?

25 Another question, which site would or could have

1 the most potential direct costs from the development of
2 the site to the City of Mount Vernon?

3 The previous speakers have talked about the
4 transportation costs and the time. I want to clarify
5 that. It's my belief that the time for handling inmates
6 to court, back and forth from downtown Mount Vernon and
7 to the Truck City Site is minimum. I drive it. I
8 represent a lot of property in Mount Vernon. I know
9 what it takes to get there, and the tracks have to be
10 crossed no matter what. The inmates will be transported
11 by vehicle. They it will not be walked across the
12 street. That doesn't happen today. Train traffic I do
13 believe is an issue overall that we have to address in
14 the City because it may have some real honest affect of
15 our commercial needs.

16 The floodwall certification will not take place for
17 several years, and the -- the Alf Christiansen Site
18 cannot be certified until that is completed, and that is
19 more years out than when the jail will be --
20 construction will start.

21 Hotels on the site. I represent three different
22 groups of hotel owners, and they are leasing their
23 properties. I've sold hotels for them and have look for
24 their sites.

25 One of the previous comments was about the tracks.

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1 Well, folks, the tracks are a factor of the Hampton Inn,
2 Candlewood Suites, and the Fairfield Inn in Burlington,
3 and they are all thriving. I5 is a factor in just about
4 every hotel on interchanges in Mount Vernon. And there
5 is planned hotels in Marysville.

6 I'm going to end with a quote from a Jim Clausen, a
7 commercial real estate broker in Snohomish County that
8 meets with us on a regular basis focusing on bringing
9 business to Skagit County. I may be a word or two off
10 here, but this what he said recently:

11 "It would be not be prudent or responsible for the
12 City of Mount Vernon Leaders to take the risk of
13 allowing the new County Jail to be built at the entrance
14 to the City that would impact the desired results of the
15 existing \$27 million investment in revitalizing downtown
16 Mount Vernon."

17 Thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Carl Crawford. Roger Pederson.

19 MR. CRAWFORD: Carl Crawford, 200 Bellmount
20 Terrace, Mount Vernon, a registered voter and a legal
21 citizen of the United States.

22 I am opposed to the Alf Christiansen Site. That's
23 the entrance to the City. We need to do everything we
24 can to make the City look beautiful. A hotel there
25 makes a lot of sense, just like the gentleman just said.

1 There are lots of areas similar to that, that have
2 commercial and hotel facilities, just like that site
3 would have, so that's a non-issue.

4 Transportation to and from the jail is a non-issue.
5 How many blocks is it from the courthouse down to the
6 Truck City Site? It's very few. If you think of other
7 cities, many cities have to travel many miles from their
8 jail to courthouse, so that's a non-issue. I'm in favor
9 of the Truck City Site, and I hope that's the decision
10 that everyone will make eventually.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. HANSON: Roger Pedersen.

13 MR. PEDERSEN: Roger Pedersen, Mount Vernon.
14 Born and raised in Mount Vernon. Raised from the -- I
15 was raised down in the Cedardale area. I find it
16 interesting you call this the Truck City Site on Suzanne
17 Lane. I'd call it the Cedardale Site, but that's a
18 matter of history, I guess.

19 I'd like to make my comments historically and then
20 perspective. In 1940, when I was in school in this
21 town, Mount Vernon was a viable, all purpose downtown.
22 It had medical facilities. It had shops. It had
23 stores. It had processing, industrial things. We had
24 two condensers. We had two processing plants.
25 Actually, three if you moved down to San Juan. It was a

1 viable, busy business center of our community. And our
2 county.

3 As you know, Mount Vernon is located between the
4 bend of a river and a hill which forces railroad. In
5 those days, Highway 99 and a route to Anacortes which
6 crossed -- was a convenient crossing of the river at
7 Skagit -- Skagit River. My grandfather was killed on
8 that river in 1906. But after 1945, the war was over,
9 things begin to change.

10 I also might say in 1945 we had Model A's and Model
11 T's and smaller cars than we have today. You could walk
12 from downtown to the hill easily. You had no interstate
13 system blocking the two routes between the two. As a
14 consequence, when I5 was built, you divided the
15 residential area and the downtown area. The walking to
16 and from the residential areas on the hill to downtown
17 ceased; and cars became more numerous and bigger; trucks
18 became larger; and people got off the railroad trains
19 and started using trucks and vehicles. Mount Vernon did
20 not adjust to the increasing size of the vehicles, nor
21 did it adapt to the increasing numbers.

22 With increased mobility after World War II, Mount
23 Vernon made some pretty -- did make various decisions.
24 And after World War II, people started to move out of
25 the Mount Vernon downtown area, one by one. And I'm

1 going to cite specifically what used to be the Mount
2 Vernon Herald was located at Second and Broadway for
3 those of you that can remember that time frame. Then
4 they moved to Second and Washington, at the bottom of
5 the viaduct. Then they moved to College Way. And now
6 they've moved to Anderson Road in the Cedardale area.

7 Our Montgomery Ward store, Sears and Roebuck,
8 medical offices, all these things have left downtown one
9 by one because of the mobility of the vehicles and the
10 larger trucks. Mount Vernon has not done a good job in
11 accommodating those things, so now we need to do
12 something and the decision that is going to be made is
13 going to affect all of this. I'm not giving a
14 recommendation for one side or the other, but it's going
15 to be a historical deciding decision as to what happened
16 to downtown, and it needs to be very well considered.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Is there anybody that I didn't
19 call that you'd like to speak? Thank you very much.
20 We're here to answer questions, if there are any. We'll
21 be here until about six o'clock.

22 Thank you.

23 (Whereupon the hearing concluded at 5:08 p.m.)

24

25

That the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my skill, ability, and knowledge, taken on the date and at the time and place as shown on Page Two hereto;

Witness my hand and seal this 27th day of
January, 2014.

Deanna M. Ellis

IN AND FOR THE STATE OF
WASHINGTON, RESIDING AT
MARYSVILLE, WASHINGTON