

Skagit County Planning Commission
February 7, 2012

Topics: Election of Officers
Work Session: Envision Skagit 2060
Shoreline Master Program Update
Planning Department Business

Commissioners: Jason Easton, Outgoing Chair
Annie Lohman, Incoming Chair
Mary McGoffin, Vice Chair (absent)
Carol Ehlers
Elinor Nakis
Matt Mahaffie
Josh Axthelm
Dave Hughes

Envision Skagit
2060 Citizens
Committee: Gus Ramos
Doris Robbins
Kerri Cook
Tim Rosenhan
Jim Meyer

Staff: Gary Christensen, Planning Director
Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner/Project Manager
Betsy Stevenson, Senior Planner/Project Manager
Ryan Walters, Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

Others: John Ravnik, Civil Engineer

Chair Jason Easton: Good evening. I call the Skagit County Planning (gavel) Commission to order. Tonight's agenda is in front of you, Commissioners. Are there any additions to the agenda or any questions about the agenda? For a clarification, Kirk, did the "Planning Agency Business" – is that the – is that addressing the issues in the memo from the Commissioners?

Kirk Johnson: Yes.

Chair Easton: Okay. I just want to clarify that. And then one note: Our next meeting is scheduled for March 6th, so in case anybody was wondering, because we looked it up here just a little while ago.

All right, so is there anything – does the agenda meet with your approval with unanimous consent for the agenda? Anything to be added? All right, seeing none.

All right. The first item is the election of officers. First order of business would be to entertain motions for – or, excuse me, nominations for Chair.

Carol Ehlers: Jason, is this supposed to be in writing?

Chair Easton: I believe that we went through this – I believe that we weren't able to do these in writing anymore. We had to start doing them in plain sight, for lack of a better phrase.

Gary Christensen: That's correct.

Chair Easton: Gary, do you want to clarify that for us?

Mr. Christensen: Yeah. This was, I think, a question that came up in some e-mails to the Department, and Ryan Walters, who's Civil Deputy with the Prosecuting Attorney's office, looked into this matter. Under the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act, under RCW 42.30.060(2), all of your votes must be publicly made at a public meeting and cannot be by secret ballot. I'm paraphrasing.

Chair Easton: Thank you.

Ms. Ehlers: In that case we have to change the bylaws.

Chair Easton: Yeah, I think that you – I think that the bylaws haven't been updated since Ryan briefed us on that last year, because the last election we did do in that same fashion last year. So it's a good point for when we get to the point where we're reviewing our bylaws. Let's make a note of making sure that we remember to update that to match the RCW then.

Mr. Christensen: Although Ryan has in his e-mail to staff indicated that under the Planning Commission bylaws, Article V or 5, section 3 provides that all votes must be public.

Chair Easton: Is there a section of those that conflicts? Maybe you can talk to Ryan about that offline, Carol.

Ms. Ehlers: I would be glad to talk to Ryan offline. It's – the important thing is that we know what the bylaws say. We follow it and it may follow the law.

Chair Easton: Agreed.

Ms. Ehlers: If neither one is being done, then we need to correct. Whatever it is that we do we need to follow the law, and I've noticed periodically that we don't seem to be quite clear as to what it is, "it" being the law – or I should say, the "laws." It shouldn't be an "it"; it should be "these."

Chair Easton: Point well taken.

Nominations for Chair: I would like to nominate Annie for Chair. I think she'd do an excellent job.

Elinor Nakis: I'd like to second that nomination.

Chair Easton: Are there any other – oh, first, Annie, will you receive the nomination?

Annie Lohman: Yes.

Chair Easton: All right. Any other nominations for Chair?

(silence)

Chair Easton: Seeing none, we'll call for the question. All those in favor of Annie as Chair, please signify by saying "aye."

Ms. Ehlers, Ms. Nakis, Matt Mahaffie, Dave Hughes, Josh Axthelm and Ms. Lohman: Aye.

Chair Easton: Aye. All those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Easton: Any abstentions?

(silence)

Chair Easton: Let the record show the Commission voted seven-zero, with Mary absent. All right? And for the election of Vice Chair we'll turn it over to the new Chair to host that portion of the program. Congratulations, Annie.

Chair Lohman: Thank you.

Mr. Hughes: Yeah, congratulations!

Mr. Easton: As the three former Chairs and Vice Chairs smile!

(laughter)

Chair Lohman: So I'd like to open up nominations for the Vice Chair.

Ms. Nakis: I'd like to nominate Mary McGoffin as Vice Chair.

Mr. Easton: I second the nomination.

Chair Lohman: Are there any other nominations for Vice Chair?

(silence)

Chair Lohman: Are there any other nominations for Vice Chair?

(silence)

Chair Lohman: For the third time: Are there any other nominations for the Vice Chair?

(silence)

Chair Lohman: Hearing no other nominations, Mary McGoffin has been nominated to serve as Vice Chair. All those in favor, say "aye."

Mr. Easton, Ms. Nakis, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Ehlers, Chair Lohman, Mr. Axthelm and Mr. Mahaffie: Aye.

Chair Lohman: All those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Lohman: Mary has been elected Vice Chair. And I believe that is the only officers that we have. So I would like to close the election of the officers. So we have elected Annie Lohman as Chair and Mary McGoffin as Vice Chair.

So moving on to the third order of business, we have a work session that is about the Envision Skagit 2060 the Citizens Committee, and I will turn it over to Kirk.

Mr. Johnson: Okay, and I'm going to head out in the lobby and get the five members of the Committee that are here tonight. Maybe in the meantime –

Mr. Hughes: They're here?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah.

Mr. Hughes: Oh. All right.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah, you could pass this around.

Ms. Ehlers: I'd like to say that – for the record – that I'm very pleased that Ryan Walters has shown up because, as I review the seventeen questions, it seemed to me that a number of those questions depend upon our understanding of what the things which he knows and understands. And some problems I can think of in the past have come from the fact that the attorney often reports to the Prosecuting Attorney and not to the County Commissioners.

Chair Lohman: You're going to introduce?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah.

Chair Lohman: Okay.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah. So, yeah, I just handed out an agenda for this section of the meeting, which is a discussion of the Envision Skagit Citizen Committee's recommendations. I have to remember that I'm now addressing a different Chair. I thought maybe the first order of business would be to go around quickly and do introductions so that everybody knows who everybody is. So I'm Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner with Skagit County.

Ms. Nakis: I'm Elinor Nakis, Planning Commission.

Ms. Ehlers: I'm Carol Ehlers, Planning Commissioner for Fidalgo and Guemes and the other islands.

Chair Lohman: I'm Annie Lohman, Planning Commissioner from the Edison area.

Mr. Hughes: Dave Hughes, District 2.

Mr. Easton: Jason Easton, District 1.

Mr. Mahaffie: Matt Mahaffie, District 3.

Mr. Axthelm: John Axthelm, Planning Commissioner.

Gus Ramos: Gus Ramos, Skagit County Housing Authority.

Doris Robbins: Doris Robbins, Edison.

Kerri Cook: Kerri Cook, from Alger.

Tim Rosenhan: Tim Rosenhan, from Samish Island.

Jim Meyer: I'm Jim Meyer and I live at 1521 ____.

Mr. Johnson: Okay, and – let's see. So the committee is going to do the bulk of the presentation of their recommendations, but I wanted to set the stage, just giving a brief update and refresher course on the Envision project and where we are. So the project started in 2009. We've received two grants from the U.S.E.P.A that's been funding a lot of the work. It involves some land use modeling that has been helpful in terms of looking at the future of Skagit County – future population growth, how that might be distributed or allocated across the landscape.

So the first year we worked with a steering committee of about eighteen members and several technical committees to kind of scope the project, develop some of the inputs for the Envision model – some of the different scenarios that we'd be using. The plan trend is the one that tries to best represent the current Comprehensive Plan. And we got the model working toward the end of that time, and then last year the Mayors and County Commissioners appointed the Envision Citizen Committee, and they'll talk about – more about – the process that they went through. But they were tasked with helping to coordinate public input into the process, both their own public input – they're all volunteers, and they dedicated a large amount of time over about a ten-month period last year, and then a number of them – as they are tonight – have come forward as volunteers to help describe their recommendations. They've talked to the Mount Vernon City Council, to the Commissioners from the ports – a joint meeting of the Ports of Anacortes and Skagit County. And they've talked to the GMA Steering Committee about their recommendations, which is the County Commissioners and the Mayors from the five largest cities and towns. So they've really done a lot of good outreach work in terms of what's in the Envision report that you were provided, I think at the beginning of the year.

So we're now moving into the implementation phase where we have a set of recommendations from the Committee, and the County and other jurisdictions are looking at whether and how to move forward with some, none or all of the recommendations in the report. And so this meeting is part of that implementation phase. You're the County's Planning Commission and so obviously it's important for you to hear firsthand what the recommendations are. And after they've had a chance to walk through those I can talk a little bit more about what we plan to do with the recommendations from here on out.

So, with that, I would like to turn it over to the Committee members.

Mr. Rosenhan: Do you have a magic clicker?

Mr. Johnson: I do. And you just aim it generally over in that direction.

Mr. Rosenhan: Hi. We're civilians like you are.

(laughter)

Mr. Rosenhan: The Envision Skagit 2060 Citizens Committee has developed a set of recommendations that we're going to present to you tonight. We were asked to seek out and distill the values that we all hold dear about this place, the values that our Skagit community would like preserved out into the future. Our focus was land use. We sought out a recommended pattern of growth that would best preserve these commonly held values.

From 1960 to 2010 Skagit County's population grew from 51,000 to about 120,000. And it's kind of interesting to look at these dot maps. This is 1900. Each dot represents a dwelling. Of course they don't show all the dwellings in the towns at that time. They're just outlined, and those are the current boundaries of the towns. By 1950 the pattern of land use settlement was more or less established. You can see how the dwellings existed in 1950, and then this is 2010. You start to see the pattern simply becoming more dense.

So as our population continues to grow we're likely to see another 100,000 people here by 2060.

Ms. Cook: And so the task of the Envision Skagit Citizens Committee was really the answer to this population question from the citizens' perspective. And just as all of you were selected to serve as a citizen advisory board on land use policy and regulations, there were twelve of us that were selected through an application process by the city Mayors and County Commissioners, just on some pretty basic criteria: that we have proven experience working collaboratively through challenging issues and that we have a commitment to shaping a vibrant future for Skagit County without any biases towards a particular interest group.

We're a diverse group of citizens from across the county who even now continue to volunteer our time because we truly care about the future of this place that we all call home.

So to be an effective Citizens Committee, our primary task has really been to listen to the community. We travelled the county meeting with local experts, people who are immersed on a daily basis in the key land use challenges of our county – things like flooding, farmland, restoration, development. We invited regional and national experts to come and share both the successes and the failures of other similar – other communities that are sharing – facing similar challenges to ours.

We also –

Mr. Johnson: So I slipped in a slide. You might want to just go down and read the names of the other Committee members.

Ms. Cook: Yes. So there are a number of us here tonight. John Cheney – he's from Mount Vernon. He's not here with us tonight. I'm Kerri Cook, again, from Alger. Cory Ertel is from Anacortes, as is Peggy Flynn from Anacortes. Jim Meyer has recently

moved from Rockport to Sedro-Woolley. Kim Mower is from Hamilton. Grace Popoff (is) from Concrete. Gus is here from Mount Vernon, as is Doris from Edison. Tim from Samish Island, Brian Sakuma from Burlington, and Nate Youngquist from west of Mount Vernon.

So we hosted a number of listening sessions, each within our own communities to really help clarify that collective community vision of the future. And we also held additional listening sessions with other various groups, including the agricultural community, the Latino and Spanish-speaking community, as well as youth from our local schools. And after about nine months of listening, we held a public open house dialogue where we tried to frame the community's collective vision of our future with a set of recommendations that we believe will really lead us in the right direction.

And the responses that we received during our listening sessions were pretty consistent across the county. Again and again Skagit residents said that they value and want to preserve the rich and diverse attributes of our landscape, such as local agriculture, food production, accessing connection to outdoor recreation opportunities and interconnected open space, and the innate value of healthy, functioning ecosystems. And these are really the elements that define the rural character of Skagit and really provide quality of life for us all.

Mr. Rosenhan: So how can we preserve these deeply held values with the County's population expected to double over the next fifty years or whenever that happens ___? The essence of our recommendations is to steer most of the growth into existing cities to avoid development in farmland, floodplains and forest lands. We recommend that the GMA goal, which is now an 80/20 urban/rural split, be up to 90% of the growth to be steered into the cities. This is an evolutionary recommendation, not a revolutionary one. But we feel that we cannot preserve what people most love about this place by sprawling over it. And this shows the preferred future in terms of red dots. A little difficult to tell the difference there.

Making our cities more populous can be done without losing their small town feel through gracious and sensitive design. We've reviewed many successful local examples of infill housing, granny flats, accessory dwelling units that preserve neighborhood character. What matters is the quality of the design applied with the sensitivity of the local community. Our historic downtowns also present great opportunities for creative mixed use development, and imagination can also be applied to redevelop our existing commercial strips, malls and big box centers, all without needing to expand our urban growth areas.

But we also need local jobs. Cities sometimes feel a need to expand to balance their tax base for commercial and industrial development. Somewhere between 30 and 50% of our working residents commute to jobs outside of Skagit County. They thus travel to industries that in turn pay property taxes into other counties, and we get the cost of providing services and building the infrastructure to our bedroom communities. Thus we have a need for more industrial land. We recommend designating 1600 acres of

new industrial land out of the floodplain, off the farmland and close to transportation and infrastructure. And our prime recommendation was up around the airport on Bay View Ridge.

And to help our cities accept more people and broaden their tax base without sprawling, we recommend that new industrial lands be placed in an industrial “tax basket,” a term of art that we coined on the committee. Tax revenues from this basket would be equitably divided amongst participating jurisdictions. And, perhaps most controversially, we recommended that Mount Vernon and Burlington ultimately merge. We say this not to extinguish hometown pride or to pick a fight between Bulldogs and Tigers, but because the strengths of each city play to the weaknesses of the other. Combining the cities will reduce competitive pressure to expand into ag land and floodplain, and it might also save a buck or two in combining a duplicate of city services.

Ms. Cook: So to preserve our rural and our resource land, we recommend purchasing or transferring a large portion of the existing development rights before they’re exercised, and not just eliminating them through uncompensated downsizing. The goal would be to prevent future residential and commercial development in the non-urban floodplain using a handful of tools, including doubling funding for the County’s successful Farmland Legacy Program. We also support no net loss of acreage in productivity from lands that are zoned for agriculture, and we encourage Skagit County to start identifying potential replacement lands for future rezoning to achieve a standard over time. Rural development outside the floodplain should generally be clustered, including moderate expansion of existing Rural Villages, such as Alger and Conway Hill.

As our cities densify, to help preserve those attributes of our landscape that we value the access to and protection of our open spaces is going to become increasingly more important to the health of our communities. We recommend that Skagit County collaborate with a diverse group of public and private partners to develop and implement a long range conservation plan for the entire county. When asked what was missing, what was lacking in this county, Skagit residents consistently identified the need to improve open spaces. Our open space network needs to be strengthened and we recommend that local jurisdictions plan for and manage our interconnecting network of wild lands and open spaces, our – quote – “green infrastructure,” just as seriously as any other civic infrastructure such as water, sewer or roads.

And, lastly, although really this is our first and perhaps our most critical recommendation, is that we request that all Skagit residents make a commitment to work collaboratively together towards actualizing our shared vision of the future. We recommend establishing a broad-based regional entity, the Skagit Alliance, to implement a unified approach to growth, development and conservation as we move through these next fifty years.

The Skagit Alliance will be comprised of diverse regional leaders from both the public and private sectors, visionary leaders who can rise above the individual silos of a

particular jurisdiction or interest group and make decisions that are going to benefit our region as a whole.

Mr. Rosenhan: The Citizens Committee recommendations represent the end of the second phase of this process, but it's far from the end. Envision needs your input and ultimately will require the support of everybody in the community to preserve what we all cherish about this place into the future.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. I thought it might be good if – Kerri and Tim did a similar presentation at the open house last June and so that's why I asked them to do it again here. I thought it might be nice to ask the other three members who have come forward if they have comments of a couple minutes, either adding to or commenting on what came from the other Committee members. So if that would be okay with you, Gus, Doris and Jim, do you have anything you want to add in?

Mr. Martin: It was a tremendous process. I really feel – I'm glad I got to be part of it because what we learned about the county talking with people and finding out more and more about this, that _____ really gave a depth to my understanding of our county here.

I serve on the Community Action Agency Board of Directors so I come at this also from – with a concern for people of all income strata. And some of the challenges that are faced throughout the county: food, because I'm involved in agriculture, and I think that as we plan for the future and just, you know, to germinate more land use situations the overlying cultural and socio-cultural activities need to become more connected in a similar manner so that we can support and have a thriving agricultural community that can farm the farmland that we are not sprawling on top of – that we can maintain a healthy economic base, as well, within these agricultural and natural resource industries. And I thought that that was integrated through the recommendations, as well.

Mr. Ramos: I came at it more from a perspective of my past experience as an elected representative on a city council, so looking at it from that perspective and the involvement that it passed on a thirty-year plan, an economic development plan for the valley around Ontario, California, back in the early '70s, before it became the sprawl that it is today. So that was kind of my vision when I was looking at it – that and my involvement locally now, as president of the Mount Vernon Downtown Association and EDASC. So the interest of economic development is strong there in what I saw. And I think the recommendations are sound from the standpoint of looking at it and not forgetting the perspective of fifty years. Because I don't think we're looking at any of these things – many of these things immediate, but trying to create a vision as to what we will face fifty years from now or as we evolve through those fifty years. And I think that's probably the most important thing. And so the education that's going to go with it into the future of bringing people along in the process is to me going to be very important. I think existing leaders – I've got to carry some of that responsibility as they begin to review and make decisions as they move on these recommendations. But they must not be left there with existing leaders but be passed on to those that come after so

there's some consistency to thought as we move forward in the planning. I've seen this in places like California where they have forgotten to do that. Where I grew up, when I moved there in 1949 it was agriculture. Now you don't find a single orange tree and very few vineyards in the area where I grew up that was agriculture.

So the recommendations of the committee in that area are extremely important. Because what I don't want to see here is what I saw evolve in California – the sprawl. And consequently the recommendation of where residential development should go. I'd like that reflected.

Mr. Johnson: I'd like to put in a plug for Gus. I could say with each member the great contribution or contributions that they made to the process, so I don't mean to be singling Gus out, but he offered early on to see if we couldn't get input from the Hispanic or Latino community in the valley into the process, and he said that he would work with his contacts in the community to try to organize a community meeting, a bilingual – or actually I think it turned out to be a trilingual meeting – which was held at the Mount Vernon High School. It was in Spanish, translated into English and translated into **Nixtecha** (?) and it was the best attended community visioning session of the ten that we held. I think there were eighty-five people there. And one of the unique things about it is there were a lot of kids. I think the other meetings we might have had one or two kids but maybe there were fifteen kids and some of them brought signs saying, "We need more soccer fields." I was wearing earphones that I could listen to the Spanish presentation, and it was just a great, kind of cultural experience to be a part of. So I want to give Gus kudos for helping to expand the reach of our outreach process.

Mr. Ramos: Thank you for that.

Ms. Ehlers: There was a reason for that. In Anacortes at least it was carefully held during the hour that kids could not come and parents with kids could not come. It was held at five o'clock. And Anacortes has found that traditionally if you hold meetings of this sort at that time, which they have been doing, that the younger generation and the children and the teenagers can't come because they can't get off work, they can't get here, they're eating. So if you have other meetings – at least out in my corner of the world – please have it later because they would like to come. I think your point is very well taken.

Mr. Johnson: Doris, do you have any comments about that?

Ms. Robbins: Sure. There're three aspects of the recommendations that I'm very concerned with, and that's the fifty-year outlook. I think we really need to start planning now but also keep in mind this is a long range development. I was here fifty years ago when the population was half the size, so I saw it grow and it's a very real – that's very real. I also saw half of the farmland go and that's something that we wish to have stopped.

Also in planning I think we need to look internationally to the developments and technology that we could learn by. For instance, water development in Singapore; waste water developments in the Netherlands; solar power in northern Germany, which is the same latitude as we are.

The third is my concern is about affordable housing, which we will need if we do develop an industrial base, and also to make affordable the agricultural working housing – make them a safe and workable place for agricultural people to stay. Also on page 43 in the recommendations you will find a website of a unique and affordable, environmentally-friendly housing development called the San Juan Community Home Trust, which is a good example that we could use as a planned project we start funding now.

Mr. Johnson: Okay, so I could talk a little bit about implementation or we could have you ask questions, make comments, engage in a discussion, which is really where we want to get. So I'm happy to defer if you want to dive in. It's really up to you.

Ms. Nakis: I'd just like to make a comment. I was in Ontario in December, and I've been going down to visit probably for the last twenty years. And this last visit was so disheartening. I mean, so many more of the vineyards and farmlands were gone, and there is so much development – industrial development – down there, housing, another mall, super malls every few blocks. When it rains, everything floods within minutes. I mean, it is just incredible. It's all concrete. And it's so disappointing because when I first started going there twenty years ago it still had that – you know, it still had a bit of flair about being in the country, rural – somewhat rural, somewhat agricultural. No, they don't grow anything there now. I saw one vineyard. I don't know. There's probably more, but I only saw one. So it was sad.

Mr. Ramos: That was an example of the type of foresight they gave to planning.

Ms. Nakis: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Ramos: One administration to the other.

Ms. Ehlers: New Jersey makes an interesting example. Where I grew up in Bergen County is a description of what you're talking about. It was rural when I lived there as a kid and it isn't anymore. New Jersey had growth management two years before we did, and if you need it, Kirk, I have all their documents.

Mr. Johnson: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: Because I've picked them up. I go back each year. It is astonishing how many really beautiful farms there still are – acres and acres and acres of them – in New Jersey. And talk about population pressures. Because, you see, when immigrants come from across the Atlantic Ocean New Jersey's one of the places they land, and the state is about half immigrant, at least first or second generation. So there's enormous

pressure also from Philadelphia and people from New York wanting to leave the really big cities and get in what they think are the smaller. And it makes a good example of what is positive about growth management and how you maintain farms, which I could give you some illustrations of later. And one of the difficulties that they can – it's expensive – that they can handle but we can't – Ed Stauffer isn't here. Yes, he is. Your comment about those of us who live in the country being disenfranchised – once the majority of people are in the cities, you see, those of us who live in the rural area, whether it's on a farm or, as I do, out in the old developments from fifty years ago, have no other government but the County. When Mary Margaret tried to create one for Camano Island, you know what Whidbey Island did – Island County did – to it. They got rid of it because you're not supposed – the rural people in this state are not supposed to be represented.

When growth management got started, all the meetings were held up in Bellingham. And, as you know, the population of Bellingham – in Whatcom County, it's mostly in Bellingham and a couple of the big cities – I never heard such bitter people as those from Whatcom County in those meetings who said that they – not a thing that they needed or wanted was being represented. Now I see that that has changed, but it's that change that I wish you'd pay attention to because they're not – they don't seem to be as bitter now as they were, which means something or other there's been a movement. But if those of us who live in the rural – and in these drawings you've eliminated many of our houses, which isn't going to work. You can keep it from increasing, but you can't wipe us out, not unless you want to buy us out. You have to figure out how we can have a government that represents us and is not interested just in the farmland but in those of us who actually live and pay taxes. That, I think, is one of the – are three of the most crucial things I see.

Chair Lohman: I believe you're asking us if we could kind of get into the weeds and kind of pepper you and staff about the –

Mr. Johnson: Yeah –

Chair Lohman: Well, I will just dive in then. I'm really concerned about your tax basket scenario of how you're planning to share the revenue between the cities and the counties. Because even now with growth management it is a struggle for counties to generate revenue because the preference is all the development go in the cities and it kind of leaves the counties out there with less income-generating opportunity. And your tax basket plan seems to be, again, swung towards populations, so the cities with the biggest populations get basically a bigger vote. It would be basically a continuation of the problem that we've got now. The County is going to be again having difficulty generating revenue, and yet the County has quite a – quite an obligation. They have a lot of infrastructure, they have a lot of natural resource responsibility, and an awful lot of us NRL folks – I'm a farmer; I've lived out in the county – we also, you know, need to be taken care of somehow. So can you maybe elaborate on that a little bit?

Mr. Rosenhan: Sure. I hear what you're saying on that and the distribution of the tax revenues is to be decided. But you're right in that the intention is to incentivize getting the cities more dense and to provide some tax base so they're not motivated to sprawl out into the ag lands to get more tax base.

But I think one way to look at this is not that we're fighting over the same size pie but to, in fact, create a larger pie so that there's more tax base and more revenue for everybody up here. And one of the problems that we have that was pointed out by the study the Port of Skagit has done when the Port looked at the available industrial lands that we have here, there's probably a gross 1800 acres of available industrially-zoned land. But much of that's in floodplain or otherwise messed up and there may only be 1000 acres of marketable land. The largest parcel in that is 60 acres of available land. ___ and Paccar's on 240 acres and Sierra Pacific's on 75, so we're already kind of at a market disadvantage right now. So part of the idea of a tax basket is to create something that's more desirable and more marketable so we might more easily acquire an industrial tenant up here that we might not otherwise get, and, thus, the pie gets bigger. And how that gets divided up between the entities is to be decided.

But I – you know, I agree with your point but if you had the same size pie then we're all fighting over basically the scraps that are on the table, but the idea is to be able to create something greater than we have right now by, at the outset, figuring out where the industry would really like to be. Often industrial lands are zoned that way because they're left over and they're really – they're not contiguous with anything, they may not have access to transportation, they may not have water and sewer in there. So if you do it as a planned industrial development, that changes quite a bit. You're much more likely to get an industrial settlement in there. But I agree with your point that it needs to be looked at really carefully because everybody's scrambling for the same tax dollars.

Mr. Hughes: A quick question. You mentioned we need 1600 more acres?

Mr. Rosenhan: Yes.

Mr. Hughes: So 1600 more over what is already zoned?

Mr. Rosenhan: Yes.

Mr. Hughes: Okay.

Chair Lohman: So have you considered – I mean, this county is largely forest because only – currently zoned it's less than 10% ag, and then I can't remember what the footprint of the cities takes up. But the majority of the county is forest. So in your plan did you maybe explore maybe taking some – siting some industrial land in what is currently forest upland – out of the floodplain? Re-designating something like that?

Mr. Rosenhan: Well, we looked primarily for a central location near transportation and near infrastructure. Another goal was to preserve the productive forest lands that we

have. Most of the forest land – you’re right: 75% of the county is forest land – a lot of that isn’t particularly close to transportation and infrastructure.

Chair Lohman: Go ahead.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, I’d like to go in a different direction. I’m intrigued and troubled by the concept of the Skagit Alliance. And I was sort of – I’ll be honest – impressed with certain parts of the report but sort of disappointed that there wasn’t more – you kind of threw this thing on the wall but I’m not really sure how it goes forward from here, so I wanted to get some insight from y’all about what your thoughts are.

In the executive summary you talk about the importance of people working together and that you recommend a – quote – “establishing a broad-based regional entity, the Skagit Alliance, to implement a unified approach to growth, development, conservation over the next fifty years.” Do you see that as being an actual regional government? Is that your intentions or are you talking about like an extension of a similar – you know, conceptually SCOG, the Skagit Council of Governments, in some ways seems to fit this description because they work – obviously – jointly on things like waste man – I mean, waste management issues, things like that. Sometimes you’ll see them work – I’m going to actually do a lot of work on regional transportation issues and such. Could you give me a better understanding of what your vision is of the Alliance and what would really – I mean, the twelve of you made a pretty serious recommendation here. What’s the next steps to see an alliance come together if the people in the community wanted one?

Mr. Meyer: I’ll jump in. The idea of the Alliance definitely was looking at SCOG as what we currently have that does look at the county on a unified basis on, you know, multijurisdictional decision-making – you know, things that we’re talking about: conservation plans, interconnected – creating infrastructure, whatever the case might be. But oftentimes the representation on SCOG doesn’t encompass the full scope and if there was a way to integrate some business and make sure that all of – you know, it’s very limited to some distinct jurisdictional or governmental entities right now, which is good but there could be a broader base that could inform the conversation going forward. You know, so are we going to advocate for a new governmental structure tomorrow? No. This is evolutionary, not revolutionary, although some of the concepts
— —

Mr. Easton: Well, it seems pretty revolutionary, but –

Mr. Meyer: But given it’s also a fifty-year –

Mr. Easton: I understand.

Mr. Meyer: – horizon, so I don’t think any of us expect –

Mr. Easton: You could take your fifty years and you could create a new government, my friend.

Mr. Meyer: It could take fifty years to make that happen. Yes.

Mr. Easton: Okay.

Mr. Meyer: But it would be good to begin to expand the scope of this multijurisdictional perspective as we move forward. Because just as the – as you were mentioning that, you know, all the cities and mayors in the county got together to sign a letter asking for getting this G.I. study taken care of – first experience of *everybody* on the same page at the same time, or one of the first. And in the non-profit sector, (if) you want to get anything done you have to have four or five entities collaborating to move an agenda forward for anybody even to take notice. So as we as a community try to move forward and push our agenda – our joint agenda, which we took our best shot at defining, based on the information we got in from our process. But to move that forward together, we need to expand the perspective so that we can move as needed to move an agenda that's this aggressive.

Mr. Easton: I guess part of the – I'm at this spot and _____ – part of the challenge is that what you're asking to add is not easily measurable. I mean, you can measure where Concrete's boundaries are and how many members of their city council there are, what their population is to the percentage of the county – thus, the amount of power they have at SCOG. Or three County Commissioners go to SCOG and serve on behalf of the County government and then the tribal communities. And that's easier to measure than the business community. Or if we start looking at racial groupings or, I mean, different types of ways to be diverse and so I was kind of curious, you know, how do you do that and how do you add to the – how does the Alliance become real? Because I think there're some really worthwhile goals in it.

Mr. Rosenhan: I think that's really a challenge. SCOG is fairly narrowly focused. (It) looks at – when it's up and running – looks at transportation stuff. And to put that in some sort of frame of reference Puget Sound Regional Council has put together its sewer and transportation. Metro Vancouver when it was formed thirty-some years ago did sewer and transportation. Now both those entities have long range planning commissions tagged on to them and it – I don't know if it took thirty years for Metro Vancouver to get to that point but, you know, they started evolving to a broader based focus on their board and they moved away from just having the sewer and water focused the same – Hey, we got some other things to look at here that have regional importance.

And so I'm saying why don't we look at an Alliance to kind of enhance SCOG? How exactly that's done is a good question. It's probably the hardest thing to do.

Mr. Easton: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Ehlers: Are you thinking of people who self-select to be members of this? Because that leaves –

Mr. Rosenhan: Are you volunteering?

(laughter)

Mr. Easton: Yeah, she is actually.

Ms. Ehlers: I might get desperate the way I have before and say “yes.”

Mr. Easton: I was going to say I’ve hear you say “yes” before!

Ms. Ehlers: But there’s a risk in this world of basing everything on those who have self-selected to run it because the rest of the population might not like the direction they’re going. One of the – I always lived in some kind of a government where there was a council, and so there was always somebody representing. This is the only discussing body for those of us in the county at all. If you have a Skagit Alliance then there has to be some way for there to be input in a structured way – like hearings, like these study sessions – because if you don’t you end up with uproar and rebellion and there’s enough of that in this world.

Mr. Ramos: I agree with that 100%. As a person who has been an elected official, I don’t think I supported this from the standpoint of changing government – you know, of changing the form of government that we have. I think the elected people that are elected to represent citizens are the ones that make the final decisions, but that doesn’t preclude the fact that you need to have regionalization – a look at it from a regional basis where you don’t have the silos and you can have advisory groups set up, so the process still has to be determined how you arrive at the Alliance.

Ms. Ehlers: Yes.

Mr. Ramos: But my support of an alliance is something that says that we bring along the citizens with us that have the interest in those areas that we have indicated in our recommendation have those interests and understanding it then. If we have members of the business community, they are having input on that. We have people that are environmentalists that have an interest in that. They’re providing their input on it. And hopefully breaking down the silos with the communication among them in reference to getting recommendations for the long range on an ongoing basis and educating people as the governments move forward with the elected representatives making the final determination on where it goes. It’s a matter of them being advisors and educators from their perspectives to the governments that make the final decision and carry it forth.

So I don’t think it’s something without checks and balances and something where you’re going to have a mob making the decision. It’s going to be thought very carefully and

then the determination of appointment perhaps to the Skagit – to that particular alliance can be done by a governing body, by a regional governing body.

Mr. Johnson: Could I just interject briefly?

Chair Lohman: Go ahead.

Mr. Johnson: So I think the – probably the origin of this idea came out of a meeting that the Citizen Committee had with what's called the GMA Steering Committee, which is the three County Commissioners and the mayors of Anacortes, Burlington, La Conner, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley. And we've been through several years of some very tough politics among the elected officials among those jurisdictions. And this is about a year ago, and I think the Citizen Committee witnessed the level of discussion that was going on among those elected officials and, frankly, wasn't very impressed – and if I'm putting words in your mouth incorrectly, let me know – and they said, Man, this is a great place. We love this place. There are things that we want to preserve, protect, build. We don't see this body, this GMA Steering Committee, getting us there because they're just fighting with each other and bickering over who has tax base or who – you know, who has this or who doesn't do that. So I think they said, There's got to be something better than that, and I – and where this could go is at least looking at the Skagit Council of Governments – and I'm probably going beyond what I should be saying at this point – and can that be made to work to function more smoothly, and perhaps to look beyond transportation and look at some regional issues like economic development or land use planning or conservation issues. It could go beyond that into the Skagit Alliance. It brings in other aspects of the community. But I think – tell me if I'm right – I think that's where the idea first kind of perc'd to the surface.

Ms. Nakis: So I had a question. There was mention of developing a tax basket of industry and business so wherever that might end up that the revenues could be – tax revenues – would be shared by the different towns. Is that right? Is that how?

Mr. Rosenhan: Yes.

Ms. Nakis: Okay, so what is the Port of Skagit County – how is that money from the taxes paid by the businesses that are Port-owned properties – okay? – how is that tax money distributed to cities now? Or is it?

Mr. Rosenhan: Hmm.

Ms. Nakis: Is that already our tax basket, is what I'm trying to get at.

Mr. Rosenhan: I don't believe that it's – you know, the Port's properties are their own special district, so the Port-owned properties, they don't tax themselves and have those tax revenues get dispersed out to the rest of the community. And what we're proposing with a tax basket is not more Port lands. What we're talking about is new industrially-zoned lands so that the owners of those properties then would pay property taxes. That

tax money gets dispersed. So the Port lands are really – it's not really a tax basket per se. The Port does have the mission of creating more economic development and getting more jobs up here. But what we're really proposing – the essence of the tax basket was an answer to the imperative to the cities that keep wanting to expand, because – particularly Mount Vernon – because they're heavily residential and they've been pushing for years to get a more balanced tax base. And that's naturally because their geography puts pressure onto ag lands and into the floodplain. So the idea of a tax basket is literally thinking outside of the box. Well, if they could get some of that tax basket or tax base by having industry sited where it really would be better anyhow, up out of the floodplain and closer to the kinds of things that industry likes and come up with some interlocal agreement on how that stuff is split. There's an interlocal agreement now between the County and Anacortes. When GMA came into being, Anacortes popped out their UGA and grabbed the refineries, and that was fairly controversial and the City of Anacortes and the County worked out a way to split those tax revenues. So what we're proposing is an adult conversation on how we might be able to remotely site some industrial land and split it up.

Ms. Nakis: So is it time to have that conversation with the Port of Skagit County? I mean if they're – where's that tax – those tax dollars going now? Just to their entity?

Mr. Johnson: I don't think Port lands are taxed. I could be wrong. Gary, you might know more about it than I do but I know we were in a Skagit Council of Governments meeting among the planners last week and the Burlington planner said to the Port planner, I'm sure glad you guys sold that Port property that was in our city limits because now we're getting more tax revenue from it than we did when you were there when we were getting zilch.

Ms. Nakis: That's right. I mean, that's what I understand, too.

Mr. Johnson: So I think the Port sees itself as a jobs basket. Their goal is economic development and I think they would make the case – like dredging of the Swinomish Channel, which is a big issue – they will say, We know that x-number of employees who work in industries that are dependent on the Swinomish Channel, for instance, live in Sedro-Woolley. And so even though Sedro-Woolley's not driving any boats down the Swinomish Channel the Port, like, wants to make the case that, you know, we're in this kind of jobs basket together and the more healthy economic development we can generate locally the more everybody benefits, even if not all of those jobs are located in Sedro-Woolley or Mount Vernon or Burlington. We have had discussions with the Port about industrial development generally – the concept of an inventory, a better inventory of existing industrial lands – those that are ready to build that could be used an economic development tool, as well as looking at the potential for designating additional industrial lands. And that's the kind of discussion, as part of the implementation phase, that will be going on. It was an issue that was discussed with the Port of Skagit and Port of Anacortes Commissioners back in January and it will be going on through the Skagit Council of Governments as these recommendations go before that body and they stimulate this kind of conversation and discussion there, as well.

Chair Lohman: I want to make sure that everybody asks their questions. Matt and Josh, did you have anything you wanted to ask?

Mr. Mahaffie: (inaudible)

Chair Lohman: Well, I have another question. You made a comment about replacement lands for agriculture. It'd take – not all land is plowable. And I know that in other counties, and particularly the one to the south of us, they have a scheme where a substitution – if you take out ag land, then you would kind of have a trade of two-for-one or three-for-one or whatever the scenario might be. But upland is not the same as tillable, plowable land down on the bottom and they're not comparable, so I'm wondering where in the world are you going to find this other land and how are you going to balance this with – there's a lot of folks that are really concerned that our tides are going to be increasing in height, and then we've got the FEMA constraints, and we have all these other pressures plus environmental constraints and more and more folks wanting us to designate habitat, which all comes out of the ag pie. So where are you finding this magic land?

Mr. Meyer: A lot of the land that is currently zoned as Rural Reserve and Rural Resource is being farmed today. So that is some of the land that could be considered to be zoned Ag-NRL should we lose Ag-NRL land for whatever purpose the community decided that it should be, you know, lost.

Mr. Easton: But that's not really a gain. I mean, you're not – you're actually losing still.

Mr. Meyer: You're still losing land here and –

Mr. Easton: You're losing working farmland if you trade it for NRL – for Rural Reserve that's already working farmland.

Mr. Meyer: Right. It merely provides those longer ____ –

Mr. Easton: We changed the letters on the map. We didn't actually – we actually de – in that scenario you just laid out, sir, we would have just decreased our farmland that changed our maps.

Chair Lohman: But then you've also given up an identity that we all treasure here in Skagit County, which is that Rural Reserve-type land. So basically you're shoving the train cars up, so what land then – when you take out of Rural Reserve – what land are you going to redesignate as Rural Reserve then to replace that? You see how it moves forward?

Mr. Johnson: The origin of the idea really came from Allen Rozema, with Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, who said, We need to have a no net loss policy in this county. We need to protect the ag land we have. We know we're going to lose some due to

things like the Tidegate Fish Initiative, which Skagitonians, Western Washington Ag Association are supportive of because it gets them something in return. So they say, Okay, so we're going to lose 2700 acres of ag land there. We want no net loss. We realize – I mean, Allen realizes that the Rural Reserve and the Rural Resource land isn't acre-for-acre the same as the Ag-NRL land. But this committee listened to that group and said, Is there some way that we can – for those lands that *are* going to be lost due to things like that, not due to urban growth expansion because they've said no to that in their recommendations. Can we recapture some land that – yeah, it doesn't fully replace it but helps to provide some of that function? And because it *is* under agricultural production now – people are farming some of it – there's some reason to think that there's some agriculture value to it. And so what we did through the process was look for the larger – kind of the less divided up land – so the larger parcels in the areas where there was kind of concentrations of agricultural production going on. And those potentially could become replacement lands or additional lands where agriculture – there could be some kind of protection for farming activities there.

Mr. Meyer: But you're correct: It's just letters on the map. It's just putting those greater protections for the Ag-NRL –

Mr. Easton: Right.

Mr. Meyer: – on that land for the future. Because you look at it all and it's _____.

Mr. Easton: Right, it's Rural Reserve. The option down the road is that they're not farming, right?

Mr. Meyer: Yeah.

Mr. Rosenhan: I'm not a farmer, but my sense of why we did that was not to provide a rationale for developing more farmland –

Mr. Meyer and several others: No.

Mr. Rosenhan: In fact, you've got protections up the yin-yang to try to keep people from building out in farmland and all sorts of recommendations on that. But in those situations where we got cornered – Tidegate Fish Initiative, 2700 acres got to go – it's better to cover some of that, even though we know it's not as good quality, than it is to ignore it. I think that's our rationale.

Ms. Ehlers: Wait a minute. We've called ag land "ag land" and we haven't made the separation here between crop land and farmland. A lot of what you're talking about – good bottom land that's crop land – can't be made and it can't be acquired in the uplands. There's a lot of farming that could be done in the upland but it isn't crop farming. And we have never separated, we've never divided that category and looked at it in terms of acreage or production or what's necessary for crop rotation or anything

else. That's never been done. So I think it needs to be before you go further into that direction.

But the second thing is there was an interesting presentation in this room before the Flood Committee about hydraulics. And that – I don't see anyone that was here that was there except me, and I didn't understand all of it but the gist of it is if we have a fifty-year flood you don't want to be in the ag land. And if you have a hundred-year flood it doesn't make any difference, as far as I can see, how many measures you do, how much money you spend on moving a levee this way or that way, or having a bypass that wanders this way or wanders some other way, it's going to be a mess. And I think it's time while you're talking about why you don't build in the floodplain that – especially now that the G.I. study's gotten some money, as of today – that people actually look to see what the impact is if we get one of those eighteen-inch cloudbursts in the upland, and then start saying, This is one of the basic reasons why we don't do x, y and z.

The Army Corps did a wonderful study – how many years ago, Dave, did they do that levee break study? Remember? It was while the hospital was still trying to build in the floodplain next to Burlington, and the mayor of Burlington kept saying, I can't handle it, I can't handle it, I can't take the risk. And he and Chuck Bennett took that Army Corps study that if the levee broke you would have an eight-foot wall of water, and then it described the rest of it. And I wish people would give access to that because it was an eye opener of what real risk is, and it illustrated beautifully what Doonesbury said last night in the paper – where you get my facts and I can arrange my facts for any case I want for any kind of study. But take a look at the flood risk here as a basic element of your planning because there isn't much can be done to pretend that it isn't real.

Mr. Easton: Chair, I have a different topic I want to ask him a question about.

Chair Lohman: Go ahead.

Mr. Easton: Let's talk about the most controversial recommendation. Let's talk about Mount Burlington or Vernington or whatever name y'all joked about in your room while you talked about this idea.

So you cite some pretty interesting historic examples, but they're pretty historic. (As a matter of fact, I don't believe there's any examples post-GMA of towns merging. Will you guys – I don't know; maybe Kirk knows – are there more recent examples in the state of Washington with jurisdictions, you know, combining?

Mr. Johnson: Not that I know of.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, and so one of my concerns is that by making this such a huge recommendation, which was obviously helpful – it sold – for the paper, it sold two papers. I mean, we can give them credit for that. They found the juiciest thing to put out for the headlines. But and I recognize that you guys had said earlier that you realize it's controversial, you realize that it's a long-term/range plan and it would need to be

done in sort of stages. You know, it's not going to happen in a – somebody votes on it, two city councils vote on it, tomorrow they, you know, join forces. When you thought this through as a group – I mean twelve of you – realistically, what do you think that looks like? I mean, how does that conversation even get started? Because I'm not really sure it got started here. It feels like you kind of threw it out there. What do you guys see as the next step in that actually happening, because I see some wisdom in some of it? Anyone?

Mr. Meyer: I'll ___. I think it starts with two cities struggling to make ends meet seeing some way they can collaborate on something.

Mr. Easton: So you call Burlington and tell them they're struggling to make their ends meet, even though their budget's got ten million from the height when it hit forty-five million. It's now like – what? – thirty-five million. I think Mount Vernon would probably agree with you on the struggling side, but I think it's interesting to see how Burlington would be motivated.

Chair Lohman: But how do you balance that then with – I went to a couple of the Citizen meetings and everybody wants to keep the rural character of their current cities. I mean, Mount Vernon is our – is it the biggest city or is Anacortes?

Mr. Easton: (inaudible)

Chair Lohman: Yeah, it has its own autonomy and its own personality. It's vastly different than Burlington. They're night and day. And so, yeah, people are – I mean, that kind of makes the hair on their neck stand up when they read that recommendation. Aren't you just kind of taking what the citizens said about maintaining our rural character of our current cities like – I mean, Edison's got a personality and Conway does – aren't you kind of just going to ruin that? And I also have family in California and I see their – when they merge those communities and make them all interconnected, they lose their identities. They are not now unique stand-alones. They just become this giant one city. Yeah, you maybe see a sign alongside the road that says, "Now you're entering..." but it sure doesn't feel that way. Aren't you kind of doing that with this recommendation?

Ms. Cook: I think that Bellingham is actually a really great local example of a larger city that has incorporated smaller areas or communities into one government, you could say, and those neighborhoods – not all of them, but a number of them have really kept a lot of their local neighborhood feel and charm and character. And I think that Bellingham is recognizing the value of that, as well. And I don't know enough about how their government works but I've definitely seen an effort where those neighborhoods are taking out local neighborhood pride and emphasizing their uniqueness, but also maintaining ___ part of the city of Bellingham, and I personally think that's a great example of where we could go.

Mr. Rosenhan: When we did the presentations, we caught a lot of heat from people who thought we were mixing the school districts and the sports teams. And, you know,

Seattle, their number one school district and there's distinction between, you know, all of the teams there. And we recognize that. I went to Mount Vernon High School back when _____ and I remember the pride that each community looks at their sport teams and the individual nature.

But when we talk about this in sort of a half-joking way, but it's the way any relationship, business or governmental, merges. You don't necessarily immediately get married. You start dating a little bit first and find maybe ways to share a maintenance cost or some administrative function or something like that. You don't even try to get together but just look for ways they might be able to combine.

And then we were asked at one meeting, Well, what's in it for Burlington because they're the ones with the tax base? Why would they even come to the table? Good question. But we don't have the G.I. study done and when we finally – everybody really hears the implications of those floodplains and recommendations, it may be that Burlington is so constrained because of the flood potential that they're essentially blocked in and really need to partner up with somebody for some upland development. We don't know yet because that study's not in. So there's a potential mechanism for starting a conversation and getting together.

But, again, our motivation is a land use motivation on this thing. The city of Mount Vernon's been under a lot of pressure to expand to get a greater tax base and if they combined with Burlington we feel that they wouldn't have that same pressure because the tax base would be shared.

Ms. Ehlers: But so would the costs.

Mr. Rosenhan: Well, but through any kind of merger, a business or otherwise, sometimes you actually lower the total costs.

Mr. Easton: It's just an interesting fact that only 1676 people in the city of Burlington felt the need to vote for the mayor to settle what to do with their thirty-five million dollar budget this last election. I mean, it's a dynamic thing that most people in the valley don't realize how small Burlington really is – I mean, when it just come to population. It's dramatic.

Ms. Ehlers: I've read a lot of descriptions of mergers in companies and they don't work very well. If you want an interesting description of mergers, look in Barron's this last week for the various mergers of about thirty-six banks that became four, or maybe five. And all you do is when you read any of the articles about the banks is hear about one nightmare problem after another that comes because Bank A wanted Bank B, or the FDIC forced Bank A to take Bank B.

Mergers are one of the things which the economics professors talk a lot about. There can be favorable things, but it's something to go into with your eyes wide open in figuring out who the actual beneficiaries are. It often turns out in a company to be the

CEO who walks away with millions and then they start to talk about saving money and then they fire this group and that group and that group and some other group, and the next thing you know people are running it who don't really know about how to run – the floodplain, for example – and there are major difficulties.

So think of that aspect of things as well as the psychology, the psychological differences in those two cities – how they approach item after item. Burlington has bought land for setbacks. This was in the urban growth area plan that we did, which I hope you folks had a chance to spend a lot of time with. Burlington has already bought the land for the setbacks. Mount Vernon hasn't done anything. Burlington has figured out how to use those setbacks for playgrounds and things which they needed to have, so they have multiple use for many of this that I admire enormously. For one reason or another, Mount Vernon didn't. And that's one of a half-dozen of major examples I could think of that are significant for our valley that might not be significant someplace else.

Mr. Johnson: Do I call you Madame Chairwoman or –

Chair Lohman: This is a work session so just ____.

Mr. Johnson: I just – I'd like to say – Carol, you said “think about.” For better or worse, their – really, their task is done. They thought about it. They were told, We think we're going to grow a lot and, you know, we have some special, unique things here. What should we do about it? They talked to a lot of people in the valley, listened to a lot of elected officials, economic development specialists, property owners and the like, and they came up with these ideas and in some ways they wanted to be provocative, or not be hemmed in by the way we've always done it. And it's kind of out there now for a group such as you and for the County Commissioners and for the Skagit Council of Governments and various city councils really to think about and say, Do we like the overall vision? Is there anything about it we like? Is it, you know, is it kind of what we already have through our Comprehensive Plan and the like, or is it radically different but to stimulate some discussions?

I know a question came up at the Mayors' Forum, the Mount Vernon Mayors' Forum last fall. The Lincoln Theater was full, and Jill Boudreau and Larry Otos were there. And a question came up. The Citizen Committee came out with a report that talked about merging the two cities. What do you think about that idea? And neither one of them said, Yeah, I think we ought to do it, but they both said – Larry Otos said, You know, maybe some regional sports activities are something that we could think about. I know a previous mayor of Mount Vernon had proposed that the two cities share municipal courts to try to cut down on some of the administrative costs and that was just flat rejected by Burlington, but maybe it wasn't such a bad idea. So like Jim said, Where do you start? Maybe it's finding something that you can collaborate on, whether it's the G.I. study or the river setbacks for the levees. So I would just like to commend them for being bold and being thoughtful and putting some ideas out there for people like you and the elected officials to wrestle with.

Mr. Ramos: And let me – again, from my perspective, the most important thing to me is to recognize where we sit here from the growing population and from the impact that will come to this valley. Because there's no denying the fact that we're – that we will get additional population here and we have to look at ways of doing things that may be different. And necessity will create that. And the manner in which it will be done will come from those in the leadership positions, those elected representatives. We are between Canada and Seattle and the growth is coming this day and we'll be sandwiched, and I've seen before how communities are sandwiched. So the perspective of fifty years out is not unrealistic to begin to think about it today. And some of the things that we came up with may not be exactly what you want to see but see something like it because there will be a need to combine services more because of the resources that are no longer available between that and the past. And the only way that you can leverage what resources you have is to have others come in with you and help; otherwise, it's not going to work. And it's the same thing that's going to happen with everybody working towards this futuristic approach to doing things unless we come together, which is what we did as a citizens committee. We were a diverse group and I was very impressed that we didn't have knock-down, drag-out fights. We were able to collaborate and come together with our ideas and our thoughts on this after listening to so many people. We didn't do this in isolation. We didn't do it by ourselves. And it's the same kind of process that's going to have to take place on behalf of all the citizens that work in that area in the interest of what we have here and what we want to maintain and protect, recognizing where the population growth is going to come without – 100,000 more people _____.

Ms. Ehlers: Who's the committee that's supposed to do this ____?

Mr. Johnson: Make it –

Ms. Ehlers: Next step?

Mr. Johnson: Like I said, the County Commissioners, the Skagit Council of Governments, the GMA Steering Committee, the city and town councils.

Mr. Meyer: The Planning Commission.

Mr. Johnson: The Planning Commission.

Mr. Meyer: The rest of us in this room, right? I mean, you know, we all need to move this agenda forward. Whatever moves forward we all do it together because we're in a democratic process.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, then let me go back. If it's going to be the GMA Steering Committee, that's the same as the SCOG, that's the same as the mayors and the County Commissioners. There's a city council for each of the cities. There is no city council for us. So where do those of us who are not in this city format, where are we supposed to participate in any kind of structured discussion?

Mr. Johnson: Good question.

Mr. Easton: I have a quick question, Kirk. Two grants – EPA grants –

Mr. Johnson: Yeah.

Mr. Easton: Then was there some matching by the County like the staff – because like in the report there's a number of staffers that are listed. Was some of that, you know, almost like an in-kind donation? On the G.I. side when we do joint things with them it's considered an in-kind donation. How did – so – and what size of grants are we talking about? Where are we at on the spending down of those?

Mr. Johnson: What a great segue! Yes, there is – so the total grant amounts in federal dollars is 1.4 million and the local match is about a third of that.

Mr. Easton: On – so a third on top of the 1.4?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah, yeah. And some of that has come in terms of – most of it has come in terms of either County staff time or, like I said, we have the Citizen Committee or the – well, the Citizen Committee, yeah. I think they racked up several thousand hours of volunteer time, which can be counted as match. The Steering Committee, the technical committees – that's all counted as match. So there's not been very much hard dollar match by the County or other local governments but there's been a lot of staff and volunteer time put into it, which – I have a sign-in sheet here which if meeting with the Planning Commission, which is the County's planning advisory body, to talk about the recommendations is clearly a matchable item. It's part of the implementation process. So I'd like to circulate the sign-in sheet and have you sign in. And if you're not comfortable being – having your time counted as matched, you can do an X by it. But if you are comfortable with it, then having your signature here takes care of that in one easy motion of the wrist.

Mr. Easton: And then of the 1.4 million, where are we at in the process? I mean, I know – it sounds like you guys are pretty close to being wound down. Is the grant pretty well spent out?

Mr. Johnson: Pretty well. Yeah, it's supporting part of my time through the end of the year, some time for our GIS Department. But by the end of the year the grant funds will be spent.

Mr. Easton: So GIS is doing some maps, some of the final mapping?

Mr. Johnson: The final mapping and the Envision model, the land use model that generated, for instance, the red dot maps is all GIS-based. So Josh Greenberg has been very involved in terms of providing GIS layers that go into the model.

I did want to make a comment. Carol, I think, said something about how people were wiped off the map in these. It pretty clearly states – say, on page 26 – that these are Skagit County dwellings as of 2010 and then page 27, these are projected future growth. It says, “Each red dot equals a new residence,” so nobody’s been wiped off the map. This is just ___.

Mr. Easton: Carol still gets to live in ___.

Mr. Meyer: We’re not erasing your house.

Mr. Johnson: – potential development could happen in different ways that that might be distributed across the landscape.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, that leads to something else, too, apropos of that. We don’t have good maps yet in the county. We have sort of maps in the Coordinated Water System Plan. But we don’t really know where there’s piped water even on Fidalgo Island, much less in much of the uplands of Skagit County. And that will play a major role in limiting – either limiting or expanding – what goes on in those areas. We’ve already faced the issue of Fisher-Carpenter Creek. We’re going to face the Nookachamps Creek. We’re going to face every creek all the way upriver as far as you go, and there is no good map yet that shows these. Each Group A system has a detailed map that is turned into the Health Department and the Planning Department, but there is no good map that represents where the Group A systems are. There’s one upriver that supposedly has one connection, but there are 800 separate parcels on which people may be living two-thirds of the year, and that’s 800 times one. That’s what I mean by lack of accuracy. If I were going to make a recommendation, I think there’s a need for real data on some of this so that you have a real benchmark of what you’ve got, and then they’ll stop criticizing us as a county for not having benchmarks.

Mr. Hughes: 7:30 – right on time.

Mr. Johnson: Yep, we’re done.

Chair Lohman: Well, I think Josh –

Mr. Axthelm: I just have a couple comments. And it’s not so much – there’s been a lot of negative stuff going on – I just hear a lot of negative things here and there – but I appreciate what you guys have done. You know, it’s not perfect. There’s a lot of things that need to be worked out. But I can see that there’s been a lot of time and thought into what – into these things. Some of the concerns that I have that are very important is your sprawl – avoiding the sprawl, avoiding these issues. But equally important is the economic growth. How do we bring stuff into Skagit County? How do we do this the right way? And I see some emphasis maybe on Bayview, but are there other areas that we can get in and develop? And sometimes you see, like, Mount Vernon has a lot of residential; Burlington has a lot of retail; Bayview is industrial. But, you know, some of that could be mixed a little bit as well, and I think that sometimes when you spread

things out like that it actually increases traffic and increases issues. So I think that that could be looked into a little bit more, in my standpoint.

Ms. Ehlers: I have a question when he's finished.

Mr. Axthelm: But you look at Mount Vernon – for instance, downtown Mount Vernon, you know, it goes in waves. It seems like all the stores fill up and then you go downtown right now and there's a lot of openings. And maybe that's the economy that drives a lot of that. But, you know, I think Mount Vernon needs some of that business, too. We need some of it – industrial development. Is there a possibility of getting that in there somewhere? Even though you've got the floodplain issues, are there other areas that can be developed? Anyway, I just appreciate what you guys have done. I think there's a lot of time to kind of – it's a good step in the right direction. Thank you.

Ms. Ehlers: We have – we collectively – a problem in that Bayview's going to get a lot more populated with a lot more businesses and a lot more of everything and there's no government for it. Now the Growth Hearings Board decision said years ago that if you expand into the city it had to be contiguous. The first Hamilton proposal failed on that. But that man's no longer involved and I don't see anyone that's quite so extreme. Why could it not be that Burlington could expand onto Bayview Ridge, leapfrogging that bog that's between it? And then Burlington would have a physical place to go that's out of the floodplain, there'd be development, there'd be management – all the criticisms that people have made all these years. Why does Bayview have to be a separate city? Why does it have to be nothing? I wish somebody'd think about that.

Mr. Hughes: Who says it has to be a city?

Ms. Ehlers: Well, somebody needs to manage it.

Chair Lohman: It does – is – the county. Did you have any –

Mr. Johnson: Just – I wanted to thank the Planning Commission for your time and attention and really good thoughts and questions. I think it's probably the most thorough vetting the report has had in a public session so far. I think we all appreciate that. And also I just want to acknowledge and thank the Citizen Committee members for coming forth tonight and also the other seven who put forward so much time to help put together the report.

Mr. Easton: The combined ten thousands of hours, or whatever it is.

Mr. Johnson: Right.

Mr. Easton: The volunteer work of these two organizations or groups is amazing. Thank you, guys, for all the time you put in. We can relate to time put in – unlike some of your other friends who go, Wow, you volunteer, we're like, We can *relate!*

(laughter)

Chair Lohman: Well, thank you very much. Moving on – all of you, thank you – moving on on our agenda item, the next item is the Shoreline Master Program Update with Betsy.

Betsy Stevenson: This is just really fast. I just wanted to let you know that we're kind of on schedule and on target with our update. We're meeting with the Advisory Committee monthly for three hours. They extended their time to get more of it accomplished. So we're drafting up the document now. So I just wanted to give you a heads up that starting in May your time is mine! So a couple meetings in May, a couple meetings in June; hopefully in July we'll have enough of a document that we can send it down to the Department of Ecology, because we'll be halfway through our grant and they just want to make sure that we're about halfway through with the process.

Chair Lohman: So in May we're going to actually have something in writing?

Ms. Stevenson: There should be. Hopefully you'll have it before that, but we are vetting it through the Advisory Committee first. They want to have a chance at it first. So we'll have at least one, if not two – I think we're planning two meetings – joint meetings – with them to kind of go through it with you to kind of go through it with you and answer questions that you may have, and just talk about it so you're feeling comfortable and confident with the discussions that they've been having. I'm working to get everything updated so the website is up-to-date because it isn't right now and I know that. But, like I said, I just kind of wanted to give you the heads up that we're going fast and furious and come May, like I said, you will be mine! And I'm not planning on sharing very much! We still have some deadlines that we need to get through.

Ms. Nakis: What is your drop-dead deadline?

Ms. Stevenson: The draft draft draft document – at this point, like I said, just to show Ecology that we're doing our work – is July 30th, and then we'll come back before you for the adoption process, you know, later on – next year.

Mr. Easton: Is the Association of Counties, Betsy – sorry, Madame Chair.

Chair Lohman: (inaudible)

Mr. Easton: Is the Association of Counties tracking any legislation right now that you or Gary know about on any potential extensions on this? I mean, I know there's been in times past, particularly during these economic challenges, there's been some legislative principles that have gone forward to kind of give us some more freedom, from a timeline point of view. Do you know if any of that's afoot?

Ms. Stevenson: I think for the Shoreline Update, since the money is available to do the work the answer is probably “no.”

Mr. Easton: Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: You know, and I haven't seen anything. Gary, maybe you're getting ready to say something. There is some legislation that's shoreline-related but it doesn't have to do with the updates necessarily.

Mr. Easton: Oh, it doesn't?

Ms. Stevenson: I'm not hearing that.

Mr. Easton: Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: We've got the money. We're expected to –

Mr. Easton: Finish the job.

Ms. Stevenson: – be done and spend it. So yeah.

Chair Lohman: So you're rolling around about right on time, then. You are –

Ms. Stevenson: We like to think we are. It's looking like we're about on schedule. That can change pretty quickly too, as you know, but so far so good.

Mr. Easton: Just keep telling yourself you're on schedule.

Ms. Stevenson: I know, I know! It's like put on the happy face and, Sure we are! But it's going to mean a lot of long hours for all of us.

Mr. Easton: Sure.

Chair Lohman: Carol?

Ms. Ehlers: I have a basic question, Betsy, that's – it's –

Ms. Stevenson: I hope we have an answer to it.

Ms. Ehlers: If you want, you can meet with me later to discuss it in detail.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: *But* I was looking at the zoning map yesterday and as I looked at the zoning map I found a large number of creeks that are zoned – the creek is to be zoned to be mined. And I do not see that if the DNR has four inches of documents that says how they have to protect creeks from any kind of logging. And people have been told that they can't even fix the deck if they're a certain distance away from a stream. I

cannot see how you can mine both sides of the stream and under the stream and not damage it, and I have this nice ___ for you for what my name looks like today. This happens to be out of my ___ from the New York Times. It's a wonderful photograph that shows a modern version of all those creeks in Montana, Wyoming and Colorado that have been mined. And it's a good illustration of how you can't have a fish living in that area very successfully. And you also have enormous quantities of silt, and once you have done this and you have a nice rain storm the water goes whoosh. So I have a list of the creeks that I was going to give you.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: And I just don't think we can continue the zoning to permit mining when we won't permit anybody to do anything else, including cut a tree, because, obviously, if you're going to mine you cut a lot of trees. So it's an example of an inconsistency within our documentation.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: And – do you want it now?

Ms. Stevenson: Sure. And then maybe we can talk about it later, too. Thank you.

Chair Lohman: Are there any more questions for Betsy from the Planning Commission?

(silence)

Ms. Stevenson: Thank you.

Chair Lohman: Okay –

John Ravnik: Madame Chair?

Chair Lohman: Yes?

Mr. Ravnik: May we ask a question? It's a workshop.

Chair Lohman: Okay.

Mr. Ravnik: Betsy –

Chair Lohman: Identify yourself.

Mr. Ravnik: My name is John Ravnik. Would you like me to go to the podium or can you hear me from here? I'm happy to go if you would like me to.

Chair Lohman: Sure. Why don't you, just to make sure that you can be recorded?

Mr. Ravnik: Good afternoon, Commission. Thank you very much. Betsy, I know this is a Shoreline Master Plan for Skagit County but it seems like the Department of Ecology has more input than the people of Skagit County. When will a draft copy be available for people to look at? I didn't hear any schedule of when you was going to have a public comment period. All I heard was a draft going out in, like, July or something.

Ms. Stevenson: Yeah, I'm sorry. I was just thinking of the schedule that we have to meet because it's driven by them. As soon as we put it together, as soon as the Advisory Committee is feeling comfortable with it, it'll be on the website. And prior to probably these guys getting it – I'm sorry – yeah, obviously the public input is equally, if not more, important. So. And there will be opportunities for public hearings and stuff, too, but the draft draft will be available for – I mean, anything that you see on there I'm willing to take comments on at any point along the way. So – but the formal comment period would be before the adoption and the public hearing. But the draft should be available, yeah, when these guys see it.

Chair Lohman: You're anticipating then *before* May having a draft draft?

Ms. Stevenson: I'm hoping that you have it before we start having the discussions, but, at this point, that's making it a real tight – because it's February and we're just starting to get certain real drafty, drafty sections put together and the Advisory Committee is going to start looking at some of that on the – at their meeting on Thursday. So I'm hoping that you will get it a little ways ahead of May. But I can't give you a date for sure of when that'll happen.

Ms. Ehlers: Betsy, you could give us – you could give it to us in segments.

Ms. Stevenson: Yeah, chapters at a time or whatever? The document is going to be a little less that way. So if it appears that things are coming out of context – if that makes sense – some of it builds on some of the rest of it, so we need to make sure that at least it's cohesive enough so you can understand it with the table of contents. And then, you know, it's going to be split in a way that the Goals and Policies can be put directly into the Comprehensive Plan, and then the development regulations would go right into the zoning code – whatever – into the development regulations of the County Code. So there may be sections like that that we can split and give to you. But we want to make sure that at least what you're getting makes sense so that it's not so piecemeal that you can't really figure out what you're taking a look at. But, yes.

Ms. Ehlers: If the glossary were to come – not the –

Ms. Stevenson: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: – not the finished one –

Ms. Stevenson: Right.

Ms. Ehlers: Maybe _____.

Ms. Stevenson: The definitions and –

Ms. Ehlers: But if the glossary could come first then people could get a sense not only of what they're reading but there's more to come.

Ms. Stevenson: Okay. Sure. That makes sense.

Chair Lohman: Make sure that you say "draft."

Ms. Stevenson: Yeah. It's all "working draft" definitely all over it in the watermark. So, yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: Okay.

Ms. Stevenson: But yes. Sorry. It'll be available to you.

Mr. Ravnik: Yeah. Thank you.

Ms. Stevenson: Yep.

Chair Lohman: Thank you, John, for asking that. Anymore questions on the Shoreline?

(silence)

Chair Lohman: Next item of business is the Planning Agency Business.

Mr. Christensen: I'd suggest a five-minute break, and let me just ask: Do all of you have a copy of the letter from the Commissioners? You do or you don't?

Mr. Hughes: I've seen it but I don't have it.

Mr. Christensen: Okay, so let me – let's take a break and I'll make some copies of it and we'll have that as our document to read by.

Mr. Hughes: Yeah.

Chair Lohman: Okay. So we'll stand down.

(break)

Chair Lohman: Okay, we're back with the Skagit County Planning Commission and we are discussing Planning Agency Business.

Mr. Christensen: Let me provide an introduction before we engage in a Q & A session. I know that each of you have received via either e-mail or through snail mail a copy of a letter from the Board of County Commissioners addressed to you and a copy of which has been provided again this evening for your reference. As you have probably heard, witnessed, seen or just simply become known, that with the adoption of the 2012 budget the Department has gone through some significant changes already, and more are expected. And so with that there's a great opportunity for all of us through sessions such as this where we can talk about how our roles and our responsibilities and how we can better assist each other and how we can do so with fewer resources, that either being staff and/or budget dollars to do the job that we've been empowered to do.

And as I and my staff have talked to the Commissioners' management team, which includes the County Administrator, the Budget Finance Director and the HR Director – the Human Resources Director – we're all trying to better understand how we can become more efficient with less. And it's a good opportunity for us to think about that and what our roles and responsibilities are and how we can perhaps become more efficient. And whether it's through reforms or more clarity or maybe just simply acknowledging that there's less that we can do, I think the Commissioners wanted us to first begin a conversation where we could talk about these things. And they are interested in your ideas and your thoughts, as well, which they have identified a number of questions, which is seventeen in total, which are attached to their letter addressed to you.

Maybe one of the points to make is that earlier this evening we had a discussion about voting and I think Commissioner Ehlers referred to our bylaws as maybe being something different or antiquated or perhaps not consistent with the public open meetings laws and requirements. So I think this letter, and certainly the interest from the Commissioners, is for us to have a conversation and some dialogue; to share some ideas; talk about what's working, what's not working. And before we proceed with perhaps drafting some changes and discussing those further, the Commissioners wanted to first hear from you which is why you have now a series of questions, or a number of questions, I should say, which I think are as much as anything to kind of prompt some conversations. And, of course, these are some of the issues that the Commissioners have identified to staff that they're interested in hearing more from you about.

So that's my introduction. Ryan is here, as well, to help with the dialogue and the discussion and to maybe answer some of the maybe more technical questions that might be based on state statutes or laws or maybe court cases or precedents. Also this isn't just something that has to be done tonight. I mean, if –

Ms. Ehlers: That's good.

Mr. Christensen: If, as a result of this conversation this evening, there are more thoughts or questions that might arise for which we don't have answers, or maybe you just on your way home tonight on your drive something comes up and you say, I wish I

would have just asked that question, or I wish I would have just said this or that. Certainly the Commissioners welcome your thoughts. You can do so by calling the Commissioners or the Chair of the Board, which is Commissioner Dahlstedt this year. His phone number's been provided.

And so, again, this is about a process in trying to figure out how we can do things better than perhaps we have, and how can we become more efficient and how can we become more clear about what our roles and responsibilities are.

Ms. Ehlers: May I make a plea that the next time a list is given us that it be organized in a form that makes it easier to take some of it out quickly and discuss several others together?

Mr. Christensen: Yeah, I don't think that there's any sense of priorities that number 1 is more important than number 17. And if I hear you correctly, Carol, your thoughts that maybe these could have been kind of lumped together some of them or categorized, maybe based on topics?

Ms. Ehlers: Yes.

Mr. Christensen: Okay.

Ms. Ehlers: It's much easier to lead a discussion if the discussion has structure to it and that some of the more basic things – for example, since you can't divide five and seven by three, we have to have nine Commissioners. That's fairly quick.

Ryan Walters: No, that's not a requirement. You could have five, seven or nine.

Ms. Ehlers: Which County district are you going to ex- – have less representation from?

Mr. Walters: Other counties that have five, seven or – that have five or seven and have three Commissioner districts – because not all counties have three Commissioner districts – have equal numbers appointed from each district. So if you have five you have three, one from each district, and then there are two at-large. Seven, you've got two and then one at-large.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, may I suggest that we leave it as it is? And may I request respectfully that our ninth member be somebody who understands forests? We've always had a forester. It has made a significant difference at one point or another in our discussions because somebody actually knows the WACs and the RCWs and that enormous board manual, and it saves us then a lot of wandering around the discussion in ignorance because some one of us can guide us. So that's my plea.

Chair Lohman: Well, what is –

Mr. Walters: My sense is that the Board of County Commissioners is inclined to leave that number alone, but what the Board of County Commissioners wanted in generating this list of questions was to make you think about everything. It's not so much a questionnaire as a think-about-all-of-these-types-of-things.

Ms. Ehlers: And they are underestimating our ability to think of all kinds of things.

Mr. Christensen: Or maybe it's focus on these seventeen and *only* these seventeen.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, two of them have said that that isn't the case.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah. So what I would suggest – and I defer to the Chair – is if we simply address these from top to bottom, we can get through the list. And we may have something to say about some of them and not much about others. And we could just start with question 1 and if there were any thoughts or comments from any of you or if Ryan and/or I had some comments we could share those, and then when there are no longer anymore comments pertaining to that question we could move on to the next one. And, again, you could, you know, provide additional comments not here tonight but sometime hereafter to Commissioner Dahlstedt.

Chair Lohman: I would like to have an informal discussion rather than a formal discussion in order to foster through this. I would like – I think, in the interest of time, if we just started at the top and if we get bogged down maybe we will set that one aside, but let's just kind of start at the top and work our way down.

Mr. Easton: Okay.

Chair Lohman: Number 1 refers to state law, RCW 36.70.040, that creates the Planning Commission and it outlines our duties. And the underlying question is, How can the Planning Commission best perform that function, which is to assist the Planning Department in carrying out its duties? So could we start a discussion on this? I think that I will – I'll go ahead and start. I think that it *is* our duty to help the Planning Department, but it is also our duty to not just be a rubber stamp for the Planning Department. It's to make sure that the will of the people and the will of the Commissioners and the underlying vision of the county and the Comprehensive Plan is reflected in what we end up with as a final product.

So any more discussion on number 1?

Mr. Axthelm: Yeah, I guess discussion or question. It says "assist the planning department," but we represent the public. That's my understanding. We represent the public and we want to make sure the public are heard. And the difference between us is we live here, we have an interest in Skagit County and in our area, where the Planning Department may not reside within Skagit County or may not have any interest besides a job or a career within the Department. So I think – that's my thought, is how do we deal with that so that we – we're always going to have conflicts between what we

want and what you see maybe as a planning goal or something as a better community ___, if that makes sense.

Chair Lohman: Jason?

Mr. Easton: Yeah, I think it's kind of interesting that we've all sort of made some comments about the public, but the actual – if you go to our bylaws, the second half under Article II, where that section of code is quoted – or section of RCW – is quoted, it does make mention to conducting hearings as required by the chapter and making findings and conclusions. I mean, it kind of goes into some of the things that we have a history – obviously – a history of doing. So I think because it's the first question, I think it kind of sets us up in sort of an odd dynamic which is just that it needs one of our individual meetings during our appointment process and then again when we have visited with all of the Commissioners that have over the years come to visit, you know, usually once a year. They've been very adamant about our role – you know, sometimes you hear the phrase – particularly Commissioner Dillon talks about the phrase “vetting.” You know, when you hear Commissioner Dahlstedt and Commissioner Wesen talk about “the eyes and the ears,” and Commissioner Wesen says that phrase a lot: “the eyes and the ears of the community.” I don't think we're going to ever see that in the RCWs per se – those kinds of phrases – or necessarily in our bylaws, but it is the – at least the concept that we seem to keep being reinforced with by the Commissioners. Practically speaking, I think that is a big part of what we do. I mean, as long as they continue to take the benign and the controversial and tell us to host the public hearing, we're going to be interacting with the public and, in some sort of fashion, between the public and the Planning Department. “Between” might not be the right word; you know, “alongside” or whatever.

Ms. Ehlers: I agree with what's been said and I have noticed that lately this Commissioner has found she needs to do something else.

Chair Lohman: All right, let's stick to –

Ms. Ehlers: This is it. A Planning Commissioner – or do I have to talk about the body as a whole?

Chair Lohman: Oh.

Ms. Ehlers: Can I not refer to what a Planning *Commissioner* may do? In this case, I have found that the Planning Department is the only department that doesn't have two screens. And so the planners cannot look at the iMap or a topographic map, which is the topography that they're dealing with, and at the same time look at either an Assessor's plat map or a zoning map, which is the Flat Earth Society aspect of things. Where I live it certainly isn't the Flat Earth Society in any way, which of course is why I pay attention. When we did zoning twenty years ago and I raised a question: What do we do when the zoning map assumes everything is flat but the reality is it is not?

In those days our maps were good. We had topographic U.S.G.S. maps. Now we not only have that but we have iMap, which is an eye opener. It's wonderful. But sometimes you have to look at both the iMap and the schematic map to see the reality, particularly if the consultant has made an error. And so once I have discovered that these people *cannot* look at topographic and flat at the same desk in front of them and see how it compares and relates, I have been pushing that they take some of the screens out of storage and give it to some of you in Planning so that you don't stumble over things that frustrate the Planning Commissioners and the public.

Chair Lohman: Elinor, do you have any thoughts on number 1?

Mr. Walters: No argument from the Planning Department on that.

Ms. Nakis: No.

Chair Lohman: Matt?

Mr. Mahaffie: I have a comment. How the Planning Commission can best perform this function as a general concept? I think we're doing it. I've seen other jurisdictions where the Planning Commission meets two or three times a year and it's just kind of out there. It's just this accessory that nobody pays any attention to. I've also seen it where the Planning Commissions get down in the real nitty-gritty and it's a lot of work that shouldn't be done by the Planning Commission. We're a happy medium between the two.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, I think the Hearing Examiner helps balance that out for us that we don't end up having to do all of that. _____?

Ms. Ehlers: By the way, if any of you take the *Anacortes American*, last week there was an excellent description by Tom Glade comparing the Hearing Examiner with the Planning Commission. It was very well written. It was concise. I recommend it to you all.

Chair Lohman: Gary, did you have any more thoughts on number 1? Ryan?

Mr. Christensen: I just – we're making notes and it's good to hear from you.

Mr. Walters: This is maybe the overarching question ____.

Chair Lohman: Yeah, I was thinking that some of these questions touch on number 1 and we'll probably get more into the weeds as we go down the list. So –

Mr. Christensen: One – I'm sorry.

Chair Lohman: Go ahead.

Mr. Christensen: One of the things I wanted to maybe follow up on Matt's comment where he talked about, you know, it seems just about right – you know, not too much maybe – you know, it feels about right. And maybe one of the questions that we might have is, Do you think of yourself as an advisory board making recommendations that should be thinking more big picture, more concept, and less kind of nitty-gritty detail? Or in trying to define your role, is it important to know how that code is to be written or is it more important for you to just be able to convey how you want the code written?

Mr. Walters: That'd be related to question 7.

Chair Lohman: Yes.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: That's question 7.

Chair Lohman: Go ahead, Josh.

Mr. Axthelm: I think, like he was saying, is that you can't cookie cutter that. There's some situations where you have to know the detail and some situations where you have – you don't need to know all the detail. So I think it's worked out pretty good. I mean, I haven't been here that long but it seems like we've been able to have the right amount of input in most situations.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Chair Lohman: I think I have to agree with what Josh just said. Because there're certain things that are – they rise to a level of enormity that they're more important, like the Shoreline Master Plan that's coming up. And we're kind of pushing Betsy: When are we going to see the draft? Because that has a *huge* impact, and the devil *is* in the details on what the code is actually going to say because we've got to walk it. Same thing with critical areas and certain things – they rise to that – where other things maybe not so much. Not that – I don't want to make anybody think that their thing isn't important, but certain things, they just take more time; there's an awful lot of repercussions and overlap and jurisdictional stuff that they require more of us.

Mr. Christensen: So, so far, so good? You kind of like the level of information you're getting or you –

Ms. Ehlers: That's a different question.

Mr. Walters: Well, I guess maybe this question is sort of targeted that you in any case, I think, would always receive code proposals, the exact code language that's under discussion. But you don't have to sit there and edit the code language. You could make a recommendation to delete a section or rewrite a section to accomplish the following objective – something like that.

Chair Lohman: I guess my – to give an example: A frustration that we have is sometimes there's some weird thing written down there as code. There was something in the Bayview Ridge thing that we saw in the updates.

Mr. Walters: What was that?

Chair Lohman: In the Comp Plan amendment, and it had to do with –

Mr. Walters: Oh, the miscellaneous code amendments.

Chair Lohman: Miscellaneous code amendments. And it was a weird item. We don't know the history. We don't know why that piece got stuck in there so we said, Well, we don't agree with this. Let's ax it. Well, it turned out that it had to do with a Hearing Board ruling. It satisfied a compliance ruling. If you've got some weird thing like that, if you could give us a heads up so that we don't sit up here axing things that we can't ax. Or, you know, we have a little bit more information. That would be helpful to us.

Mr. Christensen: Okay.

Chair Lohman: Because there *is* going to be some weird one-offs because of court decisions or settlement agreements or something, and we need to know the why. That would help.

Ms. Ehlers: I would add to that specific thing that the lawyers need to know what past decisions were, because several times we have been – we have almost been abandoned as we were writing something because the lawyer didn't know. In the early days when we were doing the basic principles on which all this is done, John Moffat had never heard of the ___ case, so we were about to put in a policy that would have reinstated this whole case that the Department of Ecology had just spent twenty years dealing with because the County attorney didn't know about it. And it was just happenstance we did. Now there's another time when the County attorney knew about something and nobody else knew about it. That kind of legal backing we have had – we haven't had any consistent legal backing and I like having someone here who knows or will go look and who will say – maybe pause sometimes on something and say, Let's visit that later when I've found an answer. In my feeling we have been left too far alone too long in the past without good legal help. That's – I'm trying to phrase that so I'm saying I'm pleased now.

Ms. Nakis: Right.

Chair Lohman: Okay, we'll probably be talking –

Ms. Nakis: I absolutely agree with that.

Chair Lohman: We'll probably be touching on number 1 frequently –

Mr. Christensen: Yes.

Chair Lohman: – as we work through, so let's move on to number 2: How can we improve the relations between the Planning Commission and the Planning staff?

Ms. Ehlers: Return our phone calls.

Chair Lohman: Well, I think everybody needs to follow the Golden Rule, no matter what.

Ms. Ehlers: Yes.

Chair Lohman: And that you should never get personal.

Ms. Ehlers: Agreed.

Chair Lohman: We should behave professionally and considerately to all staff. You are not our slaves and we are not your slaves and have mutual respect.

Ms. Ehlers: Yes – which, of course, has to be earned.

Chair Lohman: Any more discussion on number 2?

Mr. Easton: I think we need to develop a firm policy on how we handle agendas. There's been a working sort of model that creates some challenging times back and forth from both – it's _____ staff, and it's the Chair's or the Commission's position about agenda, understanding timelines. So I would suggest that the new Chair consider maybe drafting with the Department a suggestion of how you think handling the agenda would be good, instead of degenerating it into the nine of us having a discussion about it. I think that wouldn't be very fruitful, but at least maybe some sort of repeatable policy that everybody's aware of so that there's not – there's some clarity there, you know. As an example, I mean, last month's meeting was cancelled. I wasn't – you know, I wasn't aware of it until a few days after I had checked – you know, we all probably don't check our County e-mails as often as we should. It's not like we're getting a lot of – we don't get a lot of e-mail there so it's sort of an infrequent thing to check. And just communication, I think, with agendas, I think, especially we could make some improvement there if there's just a repeatable policy about how agendas are handled. They're not – if memory serves, I don't believe they're addressed in the bylaws, so who's responsible and how that works back and forth, I think – I mean, I'll just be blunt – I think probably the number one way – since 2011 is over – to improve the Planning Commission's relationship with the Planning Department was to replace the Chair. And by not standing to be Chair this year we accomplished – we have accomplished that. So I think that Annie will do a fine job of keeping our relationship with the Department solid.

Chair Lohman: I would like the calendar to be more stablized so that we don't have so many meetings cancelled. Because I think it – well, we're busy people ourselves and you kind of arrange your schedule so that you can participate and you're all geared up and you've done your homework and – kazaam! – there's no meeting.

Mr. Easton: Sure. One awkward thing about the way our bylaws are written that doesn't work well with that that I dealt with the couple years I was Chair with Gary, which is we had twelve standing meetings by law – I mean, by bylaw or by code, right? By code we have twelve standing ones, but those didn't always match with realities. I mean, sometimes that was July 4th and you're not going to do a meeting on July 4th. Or it didn't fit with how a plan was rolling out, with a thirty – you know, all the timelines you have to have for people to have time to put in their testimony and such. And so I don't know – Ryan, I guess the question's for you – is there – you know, are we required to have standing meetings? Because one of the issues – at least 20%, in my experience, 20% of the meetings that we cancelled, Annie, were meetings that were scheduled – like May's meeting's already scheduled.

Chair Lohman: Right.

Mr. Easton: It's not based on whether Betsy's going to have her report for us. Her report might be a week later, but we're going to have to cancel that Tuesday, the first Tuesday, and go with the second Tuesday because Betsy's waiting on the testimony from somebody – you know, some expert or something. Are we required to go with these kind of – this situation?

Mr. Walters: No. We can – I think that basically you should feel like we can work this out however you want. If we publish a regular meeting schedule, that means we don't have to publish _____ –

Chair Lohman: It's cheaper.

Mr. Walters: – for special meetings.

Mr. Easton: Okay.

Mr. Walters: We don't have to _____.

Mr. Easton: Do you still have to notify for special meetings but you don't have to do – you *don't* have to notify for a special meeting then?

Mr. Walters: We *have* to notify. That's what I'm saying. You don't want to skip that step.

Chair Lohman: But I think it would – it would almost be more efficient if you can count on you're going to have a meeting on the first Tuesday or whatever it is.

Mr. Walters: And the staff can just adjust their schedules to meet yours.

Chair Lohman: Yeah. And then everybody knows it's going to happen. The public knows it's going to happen and –

Mr. Easton: Well, that *is* the situation we're in right now. I mean, there are already twelve booked for this year. _____.

Mr. Hughes: My comment is I'm looking at the whole Planning staff now –

(laughter)

Chair Lohman: Yeah.

Mr. Hughes: And so it's not like they can have an agenda or a public hearing every first whatever day it is. It's, you know, I mean, you guys volunteer for the job. You know, if you can make it, fine; if you can't, it's not the end of the world.

Mr. Easton: I don't think you meant the Planning staff volunteered for the job!

Mr. Hughes: No.

Chair Lohman: But I don't think that we should have to have everybody here. We can operate on a skeleton crew if you give us the background information.

Mr. Hughes: But if they don't have it –

Mr. Easton: You mean like every member of the staff?

Mr. Christensen: Well, you need to have a quorum.

Chair Lohman: Well, we need a quorum.

Mr. Easton: She's talking about the staff.

Mr. Christensen: Oh, staff – yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: But we don't have to have a quorum of you folks.

Mr. Hughes: But they have to have something for us to hear.

Ms. Ehlers: That's true.

Chair Lohman: Right.

Mr. Christensen: So under the Planning Enabling Act, which is the statute which your powers are derived from – your roles and responsibilities – with regard to your meetings, it's very brief what the statute requires. "Each planning agency" – that's you and us; that's us – "shall hold not less than one regular meeting in each month, provided that if there are no matters over which the planning agency has jurisdiction or pending upon its calendar, a meeting may be cancelled."

So that's why we have scheduled in December, we – you know, it's the second Tuesday of each month. Now when Patti was doing it she would check to make sure that that Tuesday wasn't falling on a holiday. And so we bumped it – I think even our first meeting in January would not have been on the first Tuesday, I think. So, that said, we just kind of categorically do a notice that the second Tuesday of each month will be the regular meeting and we'll hold it or it'll be cancelled, or we can schedule a special meeting, if needed.

Ms. Ehlers: May I talk about the agenda, __ agenda item? One of the ethical obligations of a planning commissioner is to be prepared for the meeting. And we had a meeting in which we were supposed to have a discussion about roads – road standards. We got here and that session wasn't. I could have saved myself a number of hours because where I am very few of the roads are public. So the issue of what kind of private road standards are built so that in the future things like Dial-A-Ride might be able to get there – they certainly aren't likely to now – could be dealt with – that's an issue that didn't used to exist, you see, or else nobody paid attention to it. And now that I have finally gotten SCAT to recognize that there're several thousand people on west Fidalgo Island – which they didn't believe existed because there weren't any public roads to speak of – you look then to see what the consequences of the road standards are and then you look to see whether damage is dealt with, I spent a lot of time on that.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, I can address that real briefly. That was a mistake by Public Works staff, not the Planning staff. They didn't show up. I had no choice. You were all here. I had to drop it from the agenda and go forward. I mean, the other choice would be what? I mean, we could – I guess we could go to their house, but that would have been awkward. We were pretty much out of options that particular night. At the two years I chaired – two-and-a-half years – I chaired, that was the only occasion I know of where staff just actually just didn't make it. They didn't show up and we rolled with it – did the other half of the meeting and went on.

Chair Lohman: But we can – you know, a lot of this is going to be a work in progress because we're all people and we're fallible. We're going to make mistakes and we're not going to be perfect and we're not going to be able to have a perfect schedule. So if we can, you know, maybe work towards some stability so that we don't feel like we're on a yo-yo.

Mr. Walters: So maybe a strong preference for the regular monthly meeting night?

Chair Lohman: Yes. I mean, and that doesn't mean that you can't ever cancel, because things happen. But let's try to be consistent.

Mr. Christensen: Mm-hmm.

Ms. Ehlers: For goodness sakes, keep it on Tuesday.

Chair Lohman: Josh?

Mr. Axthelm: I think if we can fill those meetings up first and that way we can avoid the extra meetings and stuff – the special meetings, like last year we had a lot of extra meetings – what was it? – towards the fall and then we cancelled a whole bunch of meetings later. So if we could try to avoid that and ___ the regular meetings ___.

Mr. Easton: Careful! You've got a couple of old-timers on here and they're going to start talking about how it *used* to be in the old days when they *used* to meet every other day!

Chair Lohman: Okay, let's move on. We're only –

Ms. Ehlers: Only when we dealt with agriculture and that may happen again when you get to the agriculture this round!

Chair Lohman: We bogged down and we're only on 2, so let's move on to number 3: Do you feel that the bylaws and the County Code have adequately guided your process of reviewing plans and proposals? Are there any aspects of the bylaws that need clarification and revision?

Mr. Easton: I mentioned that I don't believe the bylaws address the agenda, so I think that fits probably better there.

Mr. Christensen: And voting – did we hear voting earlier tonight?

Chair Lohman: We did.

Mr. Easton: Carol mentioned that she didn't think the policy as you explained or have explained in the last two years about voting publicly – that it has to be – it can't be on written ballot.

Mr. Christensen: It couldn't be by secret ballot.

Mr. Easton: It couldn't be by secret ballot – wasn't clear in our bylaws. So we might need to review the bylaws to see if that's the case.

Ms. Ehlers: Oh, well, I haven't reviewed them to see if there's anything else, but I would say this: When you are writing something – a bylaw, for example – and it's governed by a specific RCW, tell us what that is.

Mr. Walters: We've talked about that before and that is –

Ms. Ehlers: Yes.

Mr. Walters: – definitely a good practice.

Chair Lohman: But I believe that bylaws are a living document. They need to be reviewed. And what had happened on these particular bylaws, they had languished for a long time so they – when we took our pen to them – they hadn't been looked at for I don't know how long. So we didn't probably get perfection and I doubt we will, but they probably should be reviewed annually by a fresh set of eyes and not the same person.

Ms. Ehlers: May I suggest that we have paper copies of that and a paper –

(several people talking at the same time)

Ms. Ehlers: I just want to continue.

Mr. Easton: I have one right here.

Mr. Hughes: Even I have one, Carol. I'm sure you have a half a dozen.

Ms. Ehlers: God help me, I don't know but I suppose maybe I do. And that we have with it – we have a reference here and County Code that “have adequately guided your process.” Those sections of the code where you process for revising Comp Plan amendments or the various things that we do, it would be useful if there were – and you may have it; I haven't looked – if there were a list of those references – for special uses, you need 14.xyz; for Comp Plan amendments, you need this, this and this – so that if we come upon a Comp Plan amendment we can of our own initiative, go refer to those sections and that will help us. That will help guide our thinking as to what it is we're supposed to be looking at before.

Mr. Easton: Madame Chair?

Chair Lohman: Go ahead.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, in the past when we get to – and it's in Appendix A, page 1, for your guys' notes, under section C, Appearance, under B, subsection 1, subsection c, Appearance of Fairness issues in the quasi-jurisdictional issues – we had occasions where the Chair has asked whether there's anyone who has something they need to disclose. One of the things that's not clear in the way this is written is, Who has the right to object to the point that someone doesn't – if someone doesn't choose to remove

themselves – like, in the past, Annie – I’m sorry – Mary on Sanfi Acres because she was a member of the ownership group of Sanfi, I think it was, she chose to remove herself. What if Annie had disclosed – this has never been addressed and I wonder about this. If someone discloses something and then some – can a member of the public or a member of the Commission object to, you know, Josh’s hearing and, you know, this particular issue? And it’s not addressed in the simplified appendix and I couldn’t find it over the years. I haven’t been able to find anything in the bylaws about that. Is there some clarification about that?

Mr. Christensen: There is an answer to that question. That’s a good question and there is an answer.

Mr. Easton: If it’s in here, I just didn’t find it.

Mr. Christensen: I don’t know that it is, but it’s – there is an answer for that question. We could get into it now or just _____.

Mr. Easton: You might _____ in the future updates or whenever that gets docketed. Because it doesn’t happen often, but when it does it would sure be nice to go back to a reference.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: That’s pretty basic because once a member of the public demanded that I rescind myself – recuse myself – completely, physically from the room. And that – I can remember three or four times when other people had that happen. And it’s just something you do because if you don’t do it then the decision may be rendered invalid in court. I think _____ –

Mr. Easton: Can you _____ at some point, Ryan, you would have to remove yourself?

Mr. Christensen: Not necessarily have to remove your – somebody can raise that issue – they can only – this is probably better for Ryan to answer, but as I understand, a person cannot raise kind of an improper or a challenge of not being fair and you’re sitting there, unless it’s actually raised at the hearing. So they have to raise it at the hearing and only at some later date could they then challenge that legally. So they can’t – they cannot raise the issue and then hope to raise it later.

Mr. Easton: But the authority lies with the individual commissioner to decide whether to remove themselves at the time? Does it lie with the Chair or lie with the – so obviously the person who’s objecting is doing that so they have standing basically in the future.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Mr. Easton: But if they're objecting to me, I get to make the decision about whether I leave the room or not, or of –

Mr. Walters: Yeah, I think that we'll provide a fuller breakdown of this later but I think, in general, that is correct.

Mr. Easton: I would suggest that it –

Mr. Walters: I think that this language is written maybe extra conservatively.

Mr. Easton: Oh, okay.

Mr. Walters: Because if you have a challenge and if that's upheld then we get to do the whole thing over again, and we want to avoid doing that. We want to avoid any _____.

Mr. Easton: Well, just from a logistics point of view, when we did the bylaws two years – almost two years – ago we didn't do the appendix, so it may be that there're some inconsistencies – I don't think we did the appendix at the time, did we?

Chair Lohman: I can't tell you that.

Mr. Walters: I don't think we did.

Mr. Easton: So there may be some inconsistency there.

Mr. Walters: And I think that I would advocate, you know, probably pulling stuff that attempts to characterize state law – just inserting the reference to the actual ___ and statute.

Mr. Easton: Thanks. Thanks, Annie.

Ms. Ehlers: But if you do reference state law, give it to us.

Mr. Walters: Right.

Mr. Easton: Definitely.

Chair Lohman: Okay, moving on: The Board of County Commissioners is considering adopting a Countywide Policy on ethics and on rules of conduct for its boards, committees and commissions. Based on your experience on the Planning Commission, what rules should be included in such a policy?

Mr. Easton: (inaudible)

Ms. Ehlers: Don't come to a meeting with your mind made up without the facts. I've seen that so often in one place or another.

Mr. Easton: You can't put that in code, Carol.

Chair Lohman: No, you can't.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, what do you do when you have a – this was a Hearing Examiner situation where the Hearing Examiner –

Mr. Easton: Wait, this doesn't apply.

Ms. Ehlers: – has come in and clearly has made up his mind, thinking the whole thing is foolish, and then later on finds that he has to listen. That's not ethical.

Mr. Walters: It is important to distinguish between legislative and quasi-judicial, because we all come with policy backgrounds and opinions for *legislative* functions, but when it comes to quasi-judicial processes we're not allowed to, you know, let those intrude upon our evaluation of the case. But you don't have hardly any quasi-judicial, and so the only place really where there's an argument that you do is with Comp Plan amendments. So that's not a frequently enough problem, Carol, that we have to address it and we do. It's the legislative portion that is your call – 99% of your function – and we expect that you come with policy background and opinions, and you weren't appointed to the Planning Commission because you had no thoughts on subjects.

Ms. Ehlers: But you also have the ethical obligation to do your homework before the meeting.

Mr. Walters: And that is possibly something that might end up in such a policy.

Ms. Ehlers: I think it should.

Mr. Walters: We don't appoint people to just sit in seats, either, you know?

Ms. Ehlers: It becomes pretty obvious if you haven't any idea.

Mr. Christensen: So you may want to give this some thought. It's already addressed in your bylaws under Article VII, Ethics and Rules of Conduct. So, you know, read that and see if something different needs to be said or if something in addition to, or simply, This needs to be stricken. Now the question here is that this really isn't just for you, as the Commission. There are other advisory boards for which the Commissioners are contemplating having such a policy so that *all* would need to abide by that so that there would be some standardization kind of throughout the various commissions and boards and committees that serve in an advisory capacity for the Commissioners.

Ms. Ehlers: I would like to raise an example which I think is an ethics problem and have you think about it. Back in 2006 and 2007 when we were doing the zoning, there was a mineral overlay. One of the mineral overlays was over a water system in the South Skagit over their wellhead protection area. And they had not been notified that this was going to happen. It was one of these generic “We’re going to zone vast quantities” – well, they didn’t – we didn’t admit we were going to zone vast quantities of land as mineral overlay. Anyway...

When I realized that this mineral overlay was going to be over this water system’s wellhead protection area, I inquired and I was told that it was illegal for me to tell these people that this was being done. But it seemed to me the heights of lack of ethics for a government to in effect start to destroy a water system that had no other way of providing water is far too far away for any pipeline system. And that when the aquifer map came and the wellhead protection area was delineated on it, it *is* underneath the mineral overlay. Now Kirk did an excellent job of pulling that conflict away on the north side of the Skagit, as far as I can tell, but on the south side of the Skagit this water system is caught with the mineral overlay and code which says that you may not complain about anything that a natural resource landowner does above you, including what might be nuisance. And if you look in the dictionary, “nuisance” can include harm.

Now that, to me –

Mr. Hughes: What’s this have to do with the topic? _____.

Ms. Ehlers: The whole thing is an ethical problem and I want you to think how you work it, how you consider it, and how we avoid doing something like that in the future. I was –

Mr. Walters: Maybe we can talk more offline about what the exact problem is.

Chair Lohman: Yeah, I think so.

Mr. Easton: I have one more thing under that _____.

Chair Lohman: Go ahead, Jason.

Mr. Easton: Last year it became an issue and Will was able to weigh in and then give me guidance. But I had an individual member of the public because as Chair I was – or they could have chose anyone; they just happened to choose me, I guess – who was sending me documentation that affected – that was affecting my consideration about a potential issue that was before us during the pipeline. So I reached out to your boss, to the civil deputy, and his instructions were that it was all right in his mind by e-mail for me to communicate that to the rest of the Commission so that they had the same material that I had been exposed to prior to the thing. I think there probably needs to be something that’s in writing that sort of clarifies that – how that situation played out – just so that we have a clear spot for somebody to go to. Because I couldn’t. At the time I

didn't have anything other than knowing I should reach out to Will because of our relationship in working together here. Because there are times when we're going to receive communication that I think it's important that the rest of us all have. And thankfully and then with Will's blessing we were all able to have that same information when we went in to go ahead and make our decision. But we don't have something that clarifies that, and I think that's something that we should consider because ethically speaking I could have gone forward with being the only Commissioner who had read that, which may have put me on both sides ethically of I, you know, have stuff that they don't know and I should have not told them. And it was an awkward, unenjoyable situation to be put in, by someone who probably thought they were doing the right thing.

Mr. Walters: So I think maybe some of the issues there are, How do we handle contributions of material from the public to the record, because there is this official record?

Mr. Easton: Right.

Ms. Ehlers: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Walters: And then also more specific instructions about Public Records Act and Open Public Meetings Act obligations than you can find in the statute, because especially with the Open Public Meetings Act there's a lot of evolving law on how you can do what when. So some of these other boards and committees are subject to those acts and some aren't so we'll have to find some way to address this.

Mr. Easton: ___ simple policy just deals with the fact that if any member of this Commission or whatever board would apply is getting individual information concerning a – something coming before us that we just simply have to share that with the rest of – I mean, maybe it's just as simple as send it to the Department, the Department sends it to everybody else. Because it does put us in an awkward position if people think that – and that's the other thing: It's just not clear whether somebody was actually trying to get something on the record or somebody was just trying to influence my chairmanship or my situation. And so I chose to take the high road here and share it with everybody, but it wasn't something that was called out for us to do.

Mr. Walters: And there're a couple other dimensions to that. So you may have felt like you wanted to share it with everybody –

Mr. Easton: I didn't know what to do with it!

Mr. Walters: Right. But we do have a prescribed – a clear process for getting something into the record, and we want people to follow that process because if we say we had no process then lots of people would make claims about I had this in the record ___ and then this would get messy fast. And so we want people – we want there to be a bright line as to whether or not they have participated in the formal process, but that bright line needn't prevent you from sharing information.

Mr. Easton: Well, and that's what was awkward is that – I mean, everybody on this board has been over the years – even the newest members are clear about what our deadlines are, about when somebody can get testimony in and when they can't. What's not clear – what wasn't clear was to do with things that came outside of that that was clearly intended to – you know, it had made an impact on what we do. So I think as you guys consider drawing up – Ryan or whoever is being tasked by the Commissioners to draw this up – I think that needs to be considered.

Ms. Ehlers: It never used to be acceptable to accept it.

Mr. Easton: The problem is how do you not – I mean, once I opened it it's accepted.

Ms. Ehlers: That's the trouble with e-mail.

Mr. Easton: That's the trouble with e-mail: Here we go.

Ms. Ehlers: We were never allowed to accept it. What we used to say to people was, I can't talk substance about something of this sort.

Mr. Easton: Well, you remember you used to deliver us real mail and tell us not to open it.

Ms. Ehlers: But –

Mr. Christensen: Yeah, it's this –

Ms. Ehlers: But, but – wait a second. What Ryan said to me at some point after all this: I don't have a clear list of exactly what is in the record on that case. And traditionally the Planning Department has taken that which came in legally in a timely fashion in the format that was expected and made a list, and that was the record and that was what you looked at, and that was what you had your discussion on, and that is what you made the decision on because that was the record. And so the crux of the issue is that you have to – and this was a problem often – you have to have enough time between the announcement of something and the time some comment is due so that the public has a chance to actually think about something instead of just ranting. You have to have enough time – and Friday afternoon is not enough – for the Planning Department to make a list that is correct and tight, and then to get it to us so that we actually have a chance to really read it before we have a discussion. Which to me means that one of the major difficulties – we saw it last summer, but we've seen it again and again and again – is the question of back timing. If you want this decision here, then when do we do this and this and this and this and this and this? And it would improve and smooth out a lot of your – of the difficulties we've had.

Chair Lohman: I think if you had some more clear direction on when we can talk to the public – when is it open for us to talk – because that's part of the reason we got

appointed here was because we interact with – we live in this community and we're not tasked to be mute. So where is the line and when is it where you have to say I can't take anymore?

Ms. Ehlers: It used to be said that a legislative matter you could talk to anybody at any time about anything.

Chair Lohman: Or a policy matter.

Mr. Easton: Which, like Ryan was saying earlier, is almost 95% of our work.

Chair Lohman: But if we had some direction.

Mr. Christensen: There might be – it might pose a problem when in fact you – let's say it's a legislative issue. It's before you, there's been a public hearing notice, you've held a public hearing, there was a written comment period, and now you've closed the record. And you are maybe beginning deliberations or have not yet started. What do you do if somebody contacts you?

Mr. Easton: That is what happened. That's the timeline that happened to me.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah. What happens – how do you deal with a public hearing, comment period and record which is now closed prior to your deliberations and you've been approached by somebody? You see them in the grocery store. I mean, it doesn't have to be an e-mail; it doesn't have to be a letter; it doesn't have to be a phone call. You just – they go to your same church and they just simply want to talk to you.

Ms. Ehlers: Okay. Now when we did the kennel hearing –

(several people talking at the same time)

Ms. Ehlers: We did the kennel hearing. I wanted to know what puppy mills were. A letter came after the hearing was closed. We were not allowed to see that. Because we never found out what a puppy mill really was, we ended up aborting the whole thing and shipping it on to the County Commissioners. Now there's an example of a legislative matter in which a requested bit of information was made, accepted and legal staff said we couldn't have it. It wasn't you, Ryan.

Mr. Walters: Some more dimensions of this is that there is really not a prohibition on you talking to the public at any point.

Mr. Hughes: It's how you use the information that you give – they give you.

Chair Lohman: Right.

Mr. Walters: And if they're talking to, you know, just Dave, they're not talking to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Easton: And in the case what I – there were clear lines in that e-mail that said, I'm trying to get this to all the Commission. I wanted to get this to all the Commission. I don't know how – I don't have everybody's e-mail. This was before we had County e-mail addresses.

Mr. Walters: What we need to make clear is that when somebody's coming to talk to an individual Planning Commissioner or individually to all of you, they're not participating. They're not participating in the process.

Mr. Easton: That doesn't give them standing.

Mr. Walters: They don't get standing. You know, they're not – their comments aren't being part of the record. And that is the important distinction that just needs to be made. We want people to participate in the established, defined process because that's how everybody gets information and that's how you hear it properly – all at once – and then you can discuss it. You can't discuss it, you know, outside of the meeting, so –

Ms. Ehlers: But if we asked for information, how is it we couldn't get it?

Mr. Walters: I didn't know the bigger parameters of that.

Mr. Easton: You don't want to know.

Mr. Walters: We can figure that out.

Chair Lohman: Carol, we're getting off topic.

Ms. Ehlers: No, this is crucial. I need to deal with it.

Chair Lohman: Well, you can in –

Ms. Ehlers: I'm not going to spend my next months writing.

Mr. Axthelm: Okay, so really what it comes down to is somebody comments on something and you – I'd rather not get it in e-mail necessarily. I would rather have it come to the public comment period.

Chair Lohman: Yes.

Mr. Axthelm: I think – but when those comments come, can we have a simple response that says, Thank you for the information. Please refer to this – please refer to the hearing, or come to the hearing, or send your public comment into the Planning Department.

Mr. Walters: That would be appropriate.

Mr. Easton: We improved on a lot of this when we – well, it's six of us currently – switched over to County e-mail because things are trackable and repeatable and – you know.

Mr. Christensen: Well, one of the things that I think we can do – and we may get to that here – is that one of the ways to disseminate this information and to have this process more or less standardized is to take a lot of this information and put it in the code. And so it's clear then that when these issues come up you can cite it, you can refer to you –

Mr. Easton: Right.

Mr. Christensen: – and you can tell the public about it.

Ms. Ehlers: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christensen: And right now it's bylaws, it's on a website, and we read it or we don't. The Planning Commission – the public doesn't know where to look for it. But if it becomes part of the code as to what the role and the responsibilities and the process are, I think that's more readily available. And that information can be disseminated and then it's available to all at really any time.

Mr. Walters: And the Department could create some standardized response that cites the particular code.

Chair Lohman: Because at the end of the day we're all bound by it.

Mr. Easton: Right.

Chair Lohman: Whether it's written down or not.

Mr. Easton: It's still _____.

Mr. Axthelm: Which one are we on now?

Chair Lohman: 5. How can Planning Commission meetings and processes be structured to maximize participation from Planning Commissioners and the public?

Ms. Ehlers: Give enough time.

Chair Lohman: I think we should work harder on being a little bit better on our parly-pro, or a similar version of parly-pro or –

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Mr. Easton: Parliamentary procedure.

Chair Lohman: And we all need to practice it because it is a tool that will help us stay on track and to make sure – and I keep looking clear down there at Josh because when you're sitting side-by-side it's very difficult to see the person on the end.

Moving on then: How can the staff presentations to the Planning Commission be structured to ensure effective use of your time and your understanding of the material?

Mr. Easton: I thought we did well on that one.

Chair Lohman: I thought they've been doing great.

Mr. Easton: Yeah.

Chair Lohman: And I think Betsy and Kirk providing us updates, and she's talked about draft drafts and we've seen draft drafts before. I think that's a great tool.

Mr. Easton: Just one little inside baseball thing. They did a great job over the last couple of years that the presenters on the staff of asking me what I thought roughly as the Chair was a good timeline for us to hit, and so we didn't end up having three presentations of the same presentation when we were doing multiple meetings about a topic. And so I think that's adjusted well over the last couple of years.

Ms. Ehlers: I'd like to praise what Betsy did in having the CAC and the Planning Commission meet together. I thought that was one of the most practical changes that has been made in the process ever.

Chair Lohman: Any more discussion on that one?

Mr. Axthelm: Just as long as we get the material as soon as we can –

Chair Lohman: Yeah.

Mr. Axthelm: – so we have an opportunity to review it. That helps me a lot. Because if I get it right before the meeting then it's so hard to comment on it and to actually have an education.

Chair Lohman: And I think it also kind of doesn't make us feel like we're pulling the rug out from the advisory committee that you've set up. I mean, they're doing a ton of work, and it's reaffirming that they are important.

Mr. Easton: Yeah, that's good.

Mr. Walters: What is a sufficient lead time?

Mr. Easton: It depends on the topic.

Mr. Walters: Typically if there's a public hearing there's going to be a notice at least two weeks in advance. What about two weeks?

Mr. Hughes: That's usually when you send it out.

Mr. Christensen: That notice is not necessarily the staff report or the memorandum.

Mr. Walters: Right.

Mr. Axthelm: And some of the public comments and stuff come in sometimes right at the last minute.

Mr. Hughes: Yeah.

Mr. Walters: The public comments are pretty much always going to come in at the last minute.

Chair Lohman: But can't you put the public comments up as you get them, rather than waiting 'til you get them all and then putting them up?

Mr. Axthelm: Then we get multiple e-mails that way.

Mr. Easton: It is a little harder to track it, though, _____.

Mr. Christensen: They could be posted on a website. I mean that would be a lot easier than mailing them to you as they come in.

Ms. Ehlers: If you put things on the web, be sure to redact the signature.

Chair Lohman: Huh?

Ms. Ehlers: The way people can cheat using signatures off the web is extensive and frightening.

Mr. Easton: (inaudible)

Ms. Ehlers: They can sell your property by forging your name from the signature.

Mr. Walters: I didn't hear what you said there, Jason.

Mr. Easton: I was just saying I think having staff reports at the same time as public notices is a great goal. It's not – it hasn't been realistic at times, depending on how big the project is. It hasn't always worked out that way, but for the most part I think the

Department's been pretty close to giving us a couple of weeks _____ at least in my experience.

Mr. Walters: It seems pretty difficult frequently to accomplish that, but it also lets the public know what this is about.

Mr. Easton: Well, the public definitely – I *have* had public complaints before and I'm sure maybe other Commissioners have too, when they feel like the staff report comes – sort of sandbags when it comes in way late in the process, and then so they didn't prepare their public testimony based on what the staff report is. So they're sitting in the crowd, they hear the staff report from Gary or Gary's staff right before they get up to give testimony. And I have had a few people meet me in the lobby later and give me a hard time about that and there was nothing I – you know, there's nothing I can do about it. If the staff report's posted to the website earlier – and I would also suggest, especially on the more controversial hearings – the staff report should be available in the back of the room. I think we've done that sometimes. But in general it'd be good just so people can at least see them when they're about – before they testify.

Ms. Ehlers: We used to have to have the staff report a week before we were supposed to discuss it.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah, that's usually what it is.

Ms. Ehlers: Because I remember one time when Kendra gave us the staff report at twenty after four and people were supposed to respond by four-thirty. There was an uproar, as there should have been. I don't ever want another study session the same day as the hearing. I want to be able to have a study session that enables me to think and to go look and do some more homework and to raise some questions, if necessary, with staff, and to find out – especially if it's complex like that pipeline thing was. But there's been a number of things in that category. I want to be able to know what the vocabulary says when it's nothing I've ever likely heard before, and to have enough time to live in addition to doing my thinking for the Planning Commission.

Mr. Walters: So what you're saying is you want to see the code proposal and have a meeting about it, and then have a public hearing at a later date?

Ms. Ehlers: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Then the public knows what's being discussed and has a much better idea of why, and it reduces the ranting.

Mr. Easton: See I'm going to respectfully and vehemently disagree. I believe that there are multiple occasions where that is redundant and borderline ridiculous, if some of the stuff that comes through this Commission that has to be dealt with, particularly some of the more simple things that have come before us before. We've had issues that we're doing a work session before we had a hearing, you know, just in the – I mean, it was either that or do three half-an-hour meetings in a six-week period, which would be a ridiculous use of these amazing volunteers' times. So I think that that has to be

balanced. I don't think we can say "every time." There's definitely – particularly _____. Especially if we start doing a better job – well, it's going to be harder with the staff changes, but when we're doing code amendments on a regular basis we don't need three meetings to deal with some of these code amendments before we do them.

Ms. Ehlers: I didn't say three.

Mr. Easton: I mean there's – yeah, I mean, well, with the way Ryan just described it it works out to be three different separate times of dealing with it.

Ms. Ehlers: We don't have to have three meetings –

Mr. Easton: In juggling the agenda over the last couple of years, you're trying to keep them full enough that they're worthwhile enough for y'all to come and not be here for an hour, and not so full that you're doing four-hour meetings.

Mr. Walters: It could end up being four if there's a preliminary meeting where there's a discussion of the concept before the code is written; then there's a code release and you have a study session; then there's a meeting with a public hearing; then there's a deliberations meeting. You could end up with four meetings on one topic.

Ms. Ehlers: That's not what I'm recommending and I think you know it. Because that's what we did with this ag volunteer stewardship thing.

Mr. Walters: Mm-hmm.

Ms. Ehlers: What I'm saying is I don't want the study session that discusses the code and the concept of the vocabulary to be held right before there's a hearing, because it means that nobody has a chance to think. I don't say that you need two other meetings to bring it all up. Talk to Gary about what we used to do when we used to have studies and then sometimes we would combine study sessions on two topics and often do a simple little thing in the third. So we had a full agenda. It just enabled us to know a lot better what we were doing and why we were doing it. And the public response was usually, Oh, well, that's simple and they go to sleep. And that means that they have confidence that it's being done and they understand it and that's okay.

Chair Lohman: Okay, moving on. Do you value in editing code proposals line-by-line, or would you prefer to focus on the broader aspects of proposals?

Mr. Easton: I think we answered that earlier.

Ms. Ehlers: Just leave out the word "or."

Chair Lohman: I think it's case-by-case.

Mr. Christensen: Are you wordsmithing it right now, Carol?

Chair Lohman: Yeah.

Mr. Easton: She actually just did a line-by-line ___.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah, I think so!

Chair Lohman: Elinor, you –

Ms. Nakis: Yeah, I just wrote in my notes, “Start with broad aspects and ___ down if you need to,” but a lot of times we don’t. But sometimes we – there’s a word in there that changes everything, like “should” and “shall,” you know?

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Ms. Nakis: And then we really do need to look through the whole document and see where the changes need to be done.

Chair Lohman: I don’t think there’s a bright line on that one.

If you attended the Short Course on Local Planning last year, did you find it worthwhile? Would you like to, or would you be able to, attend other similar trainings, and how frequently? Matt?

Mr. Mahaffie: I feel very strongly that any new member should be required to take that class. I’m a lot farther along.

Ms. Nakis: I totally agree. And having a, like, maybe twice a year opportunity for that type of training is really good.

Mr. Easton: At least once a year.

Mr. Walters: It is interesting. Even that class is different every time it’s offered. Like last time I think you had Seattle or King County Planning Commissioner, and maybe that is not the most useful one but the next one will be different.

Ms. Ehlers: Oh, he was. Would you give us that Supreme Court decision that he cited in the 1920s that’s the basis of all land use regulation? Not necessarily the whole thing, but enough of it.

Chair Lohman: Should there be limits on the number of terms a Planning Commissioner –

Ms. Ehlers: Wait a minute.

Mr. Easton: Madame Chair? I move that we adjourn and postpone a portion – the rest of this ‘til another meeting, because the discussion about term limits, in my opinion, should be done in the presence of our eighth member, who’s not with us. I think it’s an important topic and it would take considerable amount of time to discuss further. So I would respectfully request that we adjourn and reconvene to discuss the rest of these at another time.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, I know that parliamentary procedure means that I – you have to have a vote, but I would like to request training on SEPA. I’m finding that staff people say they don’t know – they’ve never been involved with SEPA, they don’t know what the process is, they don’t know how to read the documents, and they certainly don’t know that you have to keep it twenty-five years.

Chair Lohman: That’s not the topic that he –

Ms. Ehlers: Well, it’s training.

Chair Lohman: Any other discussion on adjourning and bringing this up next time?

Ms. Ehlers: I think that’s a good idea.

Ms. Nakis: You’re making a motion? I’ll second the motion to –

Mr. Easton: Motion to adjourn.

Ms. Nakis: – adjourn this meeting for now and continue next month.

Mr. Easton: At the Chair’s leisure to put it on our schedule in the future, would be my suggestion.

Chair Lohman: The Commissioners are asking that you get back to them on it. So if you have any more additional thoughts you can do that on your own.

Mr. Walters: Yeah, the Board might want you to get back to them sooner than next month.

Mr. Easton: On term limits?

Chair Lohman: No, on their questions.

Mr. Walters: The questions.

Mr. Axthelm: Who do we need to send these to? If we have comments do we just address those to you?

Mr. Walters: Yes. And you don't have to answer the questions. You can talk about anything or you could just answer the questions. But Ken Dahlstedt is the Chair this year so he's the one that the Board wants you to send it to. They don't necessarily want you to have to call all three of them.

Ms. Nakis: So it said to e-mail us at Commissioners _____.

Mr. Hughes: So the rest of the questions, if we feel about them we'll get hold of the Commissioner?

Chair Lohman: Yeah.

Mr. Walters: Yeah.

Mr. Christensen: Starting at question 9 because we – well, or if you have something you want to add to any of the previous questions.

Mr. Easton: Some of that – to modify my request, I do think it would be worthwhile, Madame Chair, for us to – if anybody wants to get back to the Commissioners in writing before our next meeting, they obviously should or can. I would like the right – a time set aside, maybe twenty minutes, half-an-hour, in the future to discuss term limits as a commission.

Mr. Hughes: But the Commissioners have – they're the ones that decide and they've already decided.

Mr. Easton: They're not that decided. They're not in that big of a rush on this, at least –

Mr. Walters: No.

Mr. Easton: I mean, they first mentioned this to me like six or nine months ago so there's not – there's no sense of urgency.

Chair Lohman: No. But there's other questions on there too that they're asking us –

Mr. Easton: Sure. I just wanted to _____.

Chair Lohman: – and we should think about as a body. And I think that this body also needs to have some discussion amongst ourselves and make sure that we are the Planning Commission, not Annie Lohman's meeting or Dave's meeting. It needs to make sure that we're all together.

Mr. Walters: I wonder if we could get your feedback on just a couple of these?

Chair Lohman: Are we un-adjourning?

Mr. Easton: But actually technically you never adjourned us so I think we're still on.

Ms. Ehlers: Well, if you're going to follow the procedure then the moment you mentioned it, Jason, it meant that you shut up everybody. And I don't want to be bullied anymore.

Mr. Easton: I don't believe I was bullying you. I apologize –

Ms. Ehlers: You shut me up.

Mr. Easton: I apologize.

Mr. Hughes: Well, that's the first time.

Mr. Easton: I apologized. There was no intention to bully you.

Ms. Ehlers: This is the time, Dave.

Mr. Easton: It was just a suggestion, Carol, to the Chair that we might have a better chance to discuss this at a later time.

Chair Lohman: Ryan, can you direct us to the one that you feel is pressing?

Mr. Walters: I think maybe we've covered a lot of these. So number 14, I think the Board was interested in your feedback on. That's the question of, Should you get a stipend? That would potentially eliminate the mileage reimbursement that you are currently eligible for.

Mr. Easton: Which, by the way, I think I live the furthest away and I'm getting less money than that per meeting, so I'm not –

Mr. Hughes: Well, my answer's no. So why don't you ask each Commissioner. I'd say no.

Ms. Nakis: I would say no.

Chair Lohman: No.

Ms. Ehlers: I would say no.

Chair Lohman: We're volunteers.

Ms. Ehlers: It's taxable.

Mr. Hughes: Absolutely.

Mr. Easton: It's not a good _____.

Mr. Axthelm: No.

Chair Lohman: We volunteered. / volunteered.

Mr. Easton: Matt wants all of ours – look at Matt! He's like – he wants all seven!

Mr. Mahaffie: Seems like mileage is appropriate because mileage – you have an expense. Different people are farther away. I live ten miles away so it's not a big deal.

Chair Lohman: Right. No, if some other Commissioner has a strong feeling that they – we should have a stipend, please speak up. I mean, I don't want anybody to feel that because the majority of us said "no" that you can't.

Mr. Mahaffie: I just have – not for or against – I just had a question: What would it do to the budget as far as how much time does staff spend dealing with mileage?

Mr. Walters: There is some concern about that.

Mr. Mahaffie: Would it be more effective to do this?

Mr. Christensen: Usually what – well, we have fewer people to help you, but usually we have to spend time kind of redoing what we get from you unless we give you –

Mr. Walters: Just because there are strict standards, not because you're doing it wrong.

Mr. Christensen: It's usually the Auditor wants it a certain way.

Mr. Easton: It might be just better if you guys _____.

Mr. Christensen: Maybe – yeah – maybe the question is, Who wants to do them? And we would prepare them for you and then you would just have to sign them and attest to it being accurate. And then we would know that they were going to be submitted correctly then.

Ms. Ehlers: That's a good idea.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: But the other thing is if there's not enough money for Leah Forbes to be able to unpack the boxes that have your reference library, then I don't see how there's enough money to pay us.

Mr. Walters: We don't pay her by the book.

Ms. Ehlers: No, but she's not been allowed because of budget.

Mr. Walters: And then number 12. Previously you used to have an annual dinner, which we discontinued, but I think that the Board did think that there was some value in that with your just interaction with staff, and the potential here would be, you know, you could interact with the public, as well, in a more public setting.

Mr. Easton: Well, the way we did it before the public was, I guess technically they were noticed that we were going to a certain restaurant – right, Gary?

Mr. Christensen: Right.

Mr. Easton: But they – it wasn't like it turned into a public meeting at the Chuckanut or something.

Mr. Christensen: Right. I mean, they were open – they were open meetings. I think we would – if we chose to do this, we would not want them to be a business meeting.

Mr. Easton: Right.

Mr. Christensen: It would really be more or less an annual get-together.

Mr. Easton: I remember voting my secret ballot next to my salmon ___!

Ms. Ehlers: I think that the meetings we had here that were joint meetings with the County Commissioners and us had a good deal of value to them.

Chair Lohman: But that's not what they asked us.

Ms. Ehlers: I know that isn't what they asked; I'm suggesting something as an alternative that doesn't cost money.

Mr. Easton: Well, that's what we've done the last couple years, Carol. We've had like – they've come like once a –

Ms. Ehlers: That's what I mean.

Mr. Easton: They've coordinated with Gary and I and we did like a once-a-year visit with them – an annual meeting.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah.

Ms. Ehlers: And I think that's a good idea.

Mr. Walters: And I think they're definitely looking for something that is low cost. They don't, you know, want an expensive dinner thing.

Mr. Easton: Tell them to bring the booze and we'll be here.

Mr. Walters: But they do want informal discussions, you know? Open dialogue.

Ms. Nakis: Just out there in the main hallway would be nice. You know, a mixer. Just have a mixer and invite the public and maybe even have some displays on some of the bigger projects that have been completed in that year.

(several people talking at the same time)

Mr. Christensen: I think it'd be more of a hanging out.

Chair Lohman: Ryan? Was there another pressing one?

Mr. Walters: And then maybe you don't need to discuss it tonight, if you don't want to take the time because it might be a much larger issue, but the final question, number 17, is more of a – another important one that you haven't really covered.

Ms. Ehlers: Members of those boards have complained that they have not had sufficient information early enough to think individually or as a group what they might believe or opine on specific suggestions. And so that would be my first suggestion.

Mr. Axthelm: I would say that they can comment just as well – just like the public – through the public comment periods. I mean, why have a special process for them?

Ms. Ehlers: Because they have to – if they're going to comment as a board, officially as a board, they have to have time for the board to meet. And if there isn't a meeting time date between the notice and the comment due they can't do it. So it's back timing again.

Mr. Axthelm: Like us, they can do a special meeting.

Ms. Nakis: Well, personally I would appreciate, you know, for them to come before us just like the Envision 2060 people did tonight to give us kind of a review of what they've done throughout the year and what their challenges are for the next year or whatever.

Mr. Christensen: Yeah, that's good.

Mr. Easton: It's joint work – I mean, we tried some joint work sessions with them last year, I think with Ag, particularly the Ag Board. I don't think we – I don't know the last time we got Forestry all together with us. I don't think we ever have since I've been on. But there was some – I think there's some good give and take on that when we're dealing with some of the – at the beginnings of some of the bigger processes, at the beginning of a shoreline or something like that.

Ms. Ehlers: I can't remember the last time that we talked to the Forestry people.

Mr. Easton: I mean, I've talked between the Chairs – the Chairs of the three committees have talked to each other on a regular – last year regularly offline, but not as a group.

Mr. Walters: I think sort of our sense is that for like the Voluntary Stewardship Program discussion what *didn't* work is the initial workshop with lots of random public commenting, and you guys up there and people at the podium.

Chair Lohman: No, that did not work.

Mr. Walters: What worked much better was you guys sat here and at least one – the Ag Advisory Board Chair – and then some other speakers here at the table.

Chair Lohman: Right, that was very good.

Mr. Easton: Annie did a great job of putting that together, with the Department.

Ms. Ehlers: Without that consultant, though, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere. What was his name?

Mr. Easton: Schulz.

(several people talking at the same time)

Ms. Ehlers: I'm sorry. I didn't know what his official title was.

Mr. Christensen: Okay. Well, we'll take those thoughts, those comments – if you have more, please share those with Commissioner Dahlstedt – and we'll tabulate those and put something together.

Mr. Mahaffie: Thank you.

Chair Lohman: And, with that, we're adjourned.