# **Written Comments**

on

Guemes Island Ferry
Environmental
Assessment - Scope

**Received Between** 

January 24, 2008,

and

February 15, 2008

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2/14/08

CHRY CHRISTENSEN, PLANNING DIR.

SEPA RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

SKAGIT CO. PLANNING DEPT

RE: QUEMES ISLAND FERRY

GARY,

VIDGE ALLENDOEZFEIZ RULED THAT

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ENCERELY,

Win Suberta.

6237 5,5HORE ROAD 98221

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 15 2008

RECEIVED



GARY CHRISTENSEN,
DIRECTOR
SKA, CO, PLAND, NG
1800 CONTINENTALPL,
MT. VERNON, WA
18273

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR. FEB 15 2008

RECEIVED

Jeb. 14, 2008

The Christianson:

Here is my note for a return to the old Guenes ferry Feledule where Darnice anded at 6 pm Monday Idrough Haurbday.

Fol Onderson's overagant decision has cost the country thousands of dollars. Let's end it now.

Sirearely,

Elaire Orderson 6237 So. Shore Rd.

anarortes, WA 98221

0 2

P.S. There should be some bind at lesson To be dearned from this experience - Ta February 5, 2008

FEB 07 2008

RECEIVED

Gary Christensen, AICP Skagit County Planning & Development Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Dear Mr. Christensen:

We would like to make our opinions known in regards to the Guemes Island ferry service and in response to your Public Notice letter.

There are two people in our household and we each have different opinions, so here goes:

Person Number 1 (in no order of priority): I would like the schedule to be kept the same, except shorten the Monday-Thursday last ferry to 9:00pm and holidays 11:00pm.

Person Number 2: I like the old schedule that stopped at 6:00pm Monday-Thursday. I wouldn't mind a compromise though, say, possibly going to 7:00 or 8:00pm.

That's about it! Good luck with the decision-making!

Sincerely,

projectaj?

Bonne antoncich Mark and Bonnie Antoncich

Guemes Islanders

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FEB 13 2008

RECEIVED

February 13, 2008

GARY CHRISTENSEN, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

Re: Guemes Island Ferry

I am a life-long resident of Guemes. I am speaking in favor of the County's operation of the ferry.

A 6-car wooden ferry was replaced in the late 50's or early 60's by a 9-car steel ferry. This was an improvement from the human standpoint, given the increasing population on the island. Thereafter, the Anacortes dock was moved from 2nd Street to the current location, which again was an improvement because the crossing of the Guemes Channel was shortened; plus the facility was better in that more parking space was available.

That area around the Anacortes landing has been steadily improved through the county's management, and the same may be said of the facilities on the Guemes side..

The acquisition of the current ferry in the late 1970's became another improvement in the transportation of persons and automobiles to the island, given the continuing influx of people who have interests on the island.

The extension of operating hours had been somewhat gradual until the change that occurred coming on about two years ago. That change generated a lot of controversy, heat and argument.

The later hours Monday through Thursday became an improvement in a couple of senses: islanders are more able to get to the mainland for medical emergencies without the necessity of having a "special" ferry crew assembled; and likewise police, utility and medical personnel can get to the island on a more regular basis.

People who live on the island, or who own property there, generally respect the solitude of the place; but invariably they have to rely on the ferry to sustain their way of life, whether they admit it or not. The ferry as it now operates allows more islanders and the public to enjoy their own lives and interests without disturbing the character of the island, and without forcing people to use the extended hours. As I see it the controversy is more a problem of population than one of ferry service.

Bud Ashbach

5538 Guemes Island Road Anacortes, WA 98221

Bud and

February 13, 2008

GARY CHRISTENSEN, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mt. Vernon, WA 98273



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Bud Ashbach

5538 Guernes Island Road

Anacortes, WA 98221

cc: 3 ds & Planning

February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Carl Bagge 7699 Hideaway Lane Anacortes, WA 98221 SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR. FEB 15 2008 RECEIVED

Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Public Notice to Comment Concerning the Environmental Review of Proposed Changes to the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule

### Director Christensen:

I am writing in regards to the Guemes Island Ferry and the issue of extended hours of operation. I would like to see the hours remain extended year-round should your environmental impact study not raise any relevant major concerns. I believe that if the environmental impact study does not raise any concerns then an extended ferry operation is a reasonable service to the working class of Guemes Island.

An extended ferry service that at least accommodates the commuting schedule of the working class of Guemes Island is nothing more than realistic. Varying work schedules, whether it be required overtime or a lengthy commute, are fairly common in the work place these days. Varying commutes and work schedules should be considered in developing an effective ferry schedule. Guemes Island is a great place to live and has its genuine characteristics but contrary to what many residents believe, it is a working community within Anacortes/Skagit County with real people that lead normal working lives.

Sincerely,

Carl Bagge 360-391-5671 February 11, 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

Dear Mr. Christensen:

I am writing concerning the Environmental Review of the proposed changes to the Guemes Island ferry schedule.

I strongly support the one decision that is least likely to cause environmental degradation of the island environment: No Action, whereby the ferry service would *not* be expanded, and instead, the level of service would revert back to the level provided prior to the passage of County Resolution Number R20060184.

I take this stance for many reasons, but I will limit myself here to those that address environmental impacts:

1. Increasing the convenience and access to the island will increase development pressure on the island. By creating a commuter ferry, you make the island accessible to individuals who work as far away as Seattle. Given the number of undeveloped lots, and homes that are currently occupied only part-time, the potential population of the island could balloon, adding more traffic to the island's roads, adding additional impervious surfaces that deflect rainwater into drainage ditches, and contributing to noise and light pollution. Furthermore, increased development will stress the current ferry operations and increasing the political pressure for more (and costly) county services.

2. We currently do not fully understand the hydrology of the island, and cannot accurately predict how many wells the island's aquifer can sustain in which locations. Many people who relocate to the island who have previously been tied to urban water systems do not understand the need to conserve this resource, and use of the aquifer is already leading

to salt water intrusion in several places.

3. As we face the reality of a warming planet, we can only guess at how climate change will affect rainfall patterns in the region, which has a direct bearing on the sustainability of our aquifer. The county once proposed a water pipeline to the island, but this solution would not be sustainable since it relies upon Cascade Mountain snow pack, which is predicted to diminish over time.

Shifting a bit from the natural environment, I want to address an issue that is rooted in the human environment. We have a strong community, and we treasure the rural character of this place. The Growth Management Act was meant to protect rural areas. Any action that expands the ferry hours seems inconsistent with the preservation of the island's rural character. A large majority of island residents oppose the extended hours. If you are trying to protect the rural character of the island and honor the strong sense of community we have here, No Action seems to be the only logical choice.

Thank you.

Paul Beaudet

FEB 15 2008

SKACIT COUNTY
PUBLIC WORKS ADMIN

## Bob and Cathy Betz 5365 Guemes Island Road Anacortes, WA 98221-9042

P: 425-861-9823 F: 425-861-9853 bob@betzfamilywinery.com Skagit County Parcel # P61754

Jacqueline J. Jonas
Executive Assistant
Skagit County Public Works Department
February 13, 2008

Dear Ms. Jonas,

We're writing to encourage Skagit County to <u>maintain the current expanded service</u> of the Guemes Island ferry on weekday evenings, Monday through Thursday. Contrary to the voice that claims to represent Guemes Island, we have found the extended service to be helpful, environmentally friendlier and more accommodating to all who pay taxes on Guemes Island.

We are not full time Guemes Island residents, but have owned our property for 15 years, paying taxes, respecting the island and enjoying our home here throughout the year.

Since the extended weekday hours were initiated we have enjoyed the island and our home even more. We have been able to reduce our overall "carbon footprint" (not just for Guemes Island) by driving after rush hour traffic, reducing our commute time by 40-50%, and thus reducing pollution.

A review of the 2007 Skagit County Real Estate Tax Statements will show that we paid \$4,869.87 in taxes. There are those who wish to keep you from hearing our voice because we are not full time residents. However, a review of the Skagit County tax statements will show that many of the permanent residents within a mile of our home pay ½ to ½ of the annual real estate tax we do. It's Skagit County's duty to listen to all voices, and not simply to those who wish to limit our legal voice and access to our home.

We are not members of any group on either side of the ferry service issue. We are simply tax payers who want a reasonable ferry schedule that accommodates the needs of working people, part time residents who work more than a few miles from the ferry dock and can't be in line before 6 PM weeknights. When we bought our Guemes Island home in 1993 it was possible to leave after work and arrive in time for the 6:00 ferry – today with the rush hour congestion on Interstate 5 it is impossible.

More →

The proponents of reduced ferry service claim that we are self-serving, that we want to waste tax payer dollars and wish to cause harm to the environment. Nothing is farther from the truth. A couple quick observations:

We are not self-serving: we simply come to our home on Guemes, tend our garden and house, enjoy the water and shoreline and respect the rights of others around us. We have always been stewards of our own property and ask nothing in return except the reasonable ability to get to our home.

We don't waste tax dollars: we have been on many ferry runs during "limited daytime hours" that would qualify as a waste of taxpayer dollars. This past Sunday at 2 PM there were three cars on the Guemes-Anacortes run, versus a Thursday night a couple weeks ago where there were 15 cars on and 8:30 PM run from Anacortes to Guemes.

We don't harm the environment: we recycle our organic waste and take all our trash and recyclables off-island when we depart. We don't depend on a polluting trash and recycle vehicle to collect our debris on the island.

A reduced ferry schedule is not the real tool to control growth; the real solution is zoning. Those who wish to control growth by limiting ferry service are truly the self-serving voices. Current zoning regulations along with the State's Growth Management Act are effective and appropriate tools to control growth.

You also requested input on a summer vs. winter schedule. The new weekend schedule is inadequate from 11 am to 5 pm. A schedule with the maximum number of runs would be most helpful. This concern may not have been brought to your attention by the ferry committee which is made up primarily of full time residents who are not normally be subjected to the long waits on Sunday afternoons. Take a look at the three-four boat back-ups on a busy July Sunday afternoon and consider the added pollution to the island environment.

Thanks for the opportunity to voice our opinion. We appreciate your willingness to hear and consider all sides. We hope the decision is made to continue the current expanded ferry service.

Best regards,

cc:

Gary R. Christensen

Kirk Johnson

## Bob and Cathy Betz 5365 Guemes Island Road Anacortes, WA 98221-9042

P: 425-861-9823 F: 425-861-9853 bob@betzfamilywinery.com Skagit County Parcel # P61754

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 15 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services February 13, 2008

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You also requested input on a summer vs. winter schedule. The new weekend schedule is inadequate from 11 am to 5 pm. A schedule with the maximum number of runs would be most helpful. This concern may not have been brought to your attention by the ferry committee which is made up primarily of full time residents who are not normally be subjected to the long waits on Sunday afternoons. Take a look at the three-four boat back-ups on a busy July Sunday afternoon and consider the added pollution to the island environment.

Thanks for the opportunity to voice our opinion. We appreciate your willingness to hear and consider all sides. We hope the decision is made to continue the current expanded ferry service.

Best regards,

cc:

Jacqueline J. Jonas Kirk Johnson

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cc: Kirk Johnson

Gary Christensen

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P: 425-861-9823 F: 425-861-9853 bob@betzfamilywinery.com Skagit County Parcel # P61754 SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 19 2008

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We are not self-serving: we simply come to our home on Guemes, tend our garden and house, enjoy the water and shoreline and respect the rights of others around us. We have always been stewards of our own property and ask nothing in return except the reasonable ability to get to our home.

We don't waste tax dollars: we have been on many ferry runs during "limited daytime hours" that would qualify as a waste of taxpayer dollars. This past Sunday at 2 PM there were three cars on the Guemes-Anacortes run, versus a Thursday night a couple weeks ago where there were 15 cars on and 8:30 PM run from Anacortes to Guemes.

We don't harm the environment: we recycle our organic waste and take all our trash and recyclables off-island when we depart. We don't depend on a polluting trash and recycle vehicle to collect our debris on the island.

A reduced ferry schedule is not the real tool to control growth; the real solution is zoning. Those who wish to control growth by limiting ferry service are truly the self-serving voices. Current zoning regulations along with the State's Growth Management Act are effective and appropriate tools to control growth.

You also requested input on a summer vs. winter schedule. The new weekend schedule is inadequate from 11 am to 5 pm. A schedule with the maximum number of runs would be most helpful. This concern may not have been brought to your attention by the ferry committee which is made up primarily of full time residents who are not normally be subjected to the long waits on Sunday afternoons. Take a look at the three-four boat back-ups on a busy July Sunday afternoon and consider the added pollution to the island environment.

Thanks for the opportunity to voice our opinion. We appreciate your willingness to hear and consider all sides. We hope the decision is made to continue the current expanded ferry service.

Best regards,

cc:

Jacqueline J. Jonas Gary Christensen Feb 15, 2008

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 19 2008

RECEIVED

To: Gary Christensen, AICP

SEPA Responsible Official

Skagit County Planning and Development Services Dept.

1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

From: Barbara Rudge

Land Use Planner

er

7303 Young Road, NW Olympia, WA 98502

Submitted by FAX on behalf of Friends of Guemes Island

RE: COMMENTS ON PROPOSED MODIFICATION OF FERRY SCHEDULE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Public has been invited to comment on the scope and proposed parameters of the Environmental Assessment upon which the County proposes to base their Threshold Determination. The EA assumptions identified are flawed, the Alternatives are unreasonable, and the Scope is far too limited

#### ASSUMPTIONS

Ideally, an Environmental Assessment should be approached with an open mind, with no attempt to influence the outcome. The goal should be to consider all the facts and possibilities. Using Assumptions can greatly influence the results. The County could have reasonably chosen the following Assumptions:

- 1. Guemes Island is a sole source aquifer, a critical area, where salt intrusion in wells is indicating that the water system is being overtaxed.
- 2. Increased population using more groundwater will exacerbate the problem.
- 3. Improved transportation facilities are known to stimulate growth.

While the above Assumptions are completely accurate, they would produce a very different set of conclusions about environmental impacts than the Assumptions the County has proposed. By attempting to establish the three flawed "Assumptions" they have chosen as a baseline, the County is trying to limit the parameters at the beginning of the process, hoping to avoid undesired conclusions.

## Assumption #1

The County states that the EA will assume a build out of 1,584 units. This has the appearance of trying to obstruct the suggestion that the number of potential units on the island can be altered. The County points to the SEPA analysis done for the 1997, 2000

and 2007 Comprehensive Plan Land use designations and seems to suggest that the existing designations and future growth imposed was already analyzed for its impact on the island. The scoping section states that they will looking only at ferry induced growth and development "not anticipated" under the CP Land use designations. However, the truth is the County has never preformed any SEPA analysis on the impact of its land use designations on Guemes Island. It has not done the work to establish the holding capacity of this fragile island so they have no basis for "anticipating" what the impact of 1,584 units will have on the unique natural systems that support the island's population. By attempting to establish 1,584 units as a "given" baseline, they can avert publicly documenting in the EA that the island water system cannot support this many units and avoid admitting that, when the natural system does fail, their solution will be to introduce public utilities, allowing more growth and encouraging redesignation to higher densities.

The build out number is not written in stone. The County has the opportunity to use a variety of innovative techniques to reduce the potential build out such as downzoning, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, purchase of shorelines for parks, stronger limitations on permitting new wells and septic systems, and other methods. The County does not mention that a Subarea Plan currently being developed for Guemes Island offers the opportunity to implement such techniques to reduce future growth to protect the natural water system from further degradation.

### Assumption #2

The County states in its "Invitation to Comment" that it is assumed that the County "must adopt transportation infrastructure, including ferry service that is consistent with, and supportive of, the rural and resource land use designations adopted for Guemes Island" in Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan (CP). The Invitation to Comment further states on Page 3, that the ferry schedule should "accommodate present and future needs of Guemes Island residents and alternatives will be judged by "their ability to accomplish the objective of efficiently serving growth and development anticipated." Thus, the County asserts that under its CP it must implement a ferry schedule that supports growth and development.

This assumption is inaccurate and completely misconstrues the directives of the Comprehensive Plan. The County may wish to use this assumption for its own reasons but the assumption is certainly not required by the CP. CP policy does tell planners that transportation improvements must be consistent "the goals, policies, and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan." However, those goals and policies specify that improvements must not result in adverse impacts to existing rural character, elements of the environment and natural systems, such water resources and critical areas.

There is no policy that requires the County to make transportation improvements to facilitate future growth and development. On the contrary, Policy 3A-2.1 directs the county to manage density designations in rural areas like Guemes to protect existing character and environment and manage the traffic. In other words, if growth and development will undermine "existing rural character, natural resource lands, open space, critical areas, significant cultural resources, and water resources," rather than improve

transportation facilities to accommodate that growth, the County should reduce densities to cut future development and minimize traffic.

The following County Planning Policies and CP goals and policies clearly direct the county to make transportation improvements to serve *existing* development and avoid impacts.

- **CPP 3.3**: The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environment impacts and costs.
- **CPP 3.5**: Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies, and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Goal A1, Transportation Element: Maintain and improve the County roadway system consistent with the growth management strategies of the Land Use Element, and respect the unique environmental and economic character of the area.
- **3A-2.1** Manage development in rural areas through density requirements that protect and, and that manage traffic volumes.
- **3A-3.1** Priorities for funding public investment in rural areas shall be to maintain or upgrade existing facilities, services, and utilities to serve existing development at rural service standards. New facilities, services, roads, and utilities which support planned rural growth shall meet rural service standards.
- **3A-3.2** Standards and plans for structures, roads and utility systems, and other public services and facilities shall be consistent with rural densities and uses. Such facilities and services shall be such designed, constructed, and provided to minimize the alteration of the landscape and the impacts to rural residents and community character, to preserve natural systems, to protect critical areas, to protect important land features such as ridgelines, to retain historic and cultural structures/landscapes, and scenic amenities.

Assumption #3.

The County states that it is assumed that critical areas, including Aquifer Recharge Areas will *continue* to be identified. While it may be hoped that the County will begin to fund the studies necessary to identify critical water resource areas and take measures to protect the Guemes Island water supply from salt water intrusion and failure, it cannot be assumed that they will *continue* to work in this direction as there have been no efforts to date. As Steve Orsini states in his letter dated Feb 7, 2008, no effort to identify or study the water system has ever been undertaken by the County. The hydrogeology study sited by the County was completed through a grant obtained by Guemes Island residents without County involvement. The County has made no effort to complete its state mandated (RCW 90.82) responsibility to develop a Watershed Resource Inventory Area

(WRIA 3) plan for Guemes that contains "strategies to provide sufficient water" for existing and future residential populations on the island. Skagit County is fully aware of the salt water intrusion problems on Guemes, particularly as Skagit PUD built a desalination plant at the north end of the island to deal with well failures and has studied the possiblity of extending a water line to the island. But the County continues to promote growth and development through transportation improvements without developing any stategies to deal with the water crisis.

Assumption that the Proposal is a Non-project Action

The County has made the assumption that it can call their proposal a nonproject action under WAC197-11-704(b) which defines nonproject actions as "decisions on policies, plans, and programs" and lists road, street and highway *plans*. This Proposal is not merely a road, street or highway *plan*; it is similar to building a new bridge to be used in specific hours. "A project action involves a decision on a specific project, such as a construction or management activity located in a defined geographic area."

The assumption on Page 1 of the Invitation to Comment that this Proposal "is not expected to impact future land use decisions or result in a need for additional terminal space, dock improvements, parking, or road improvements" so it is a non-project action is not only premature and without basis, it is contradicted by the County on Page 2:

"Once a new ferry schedule is adopted and implemented by the County, there may be site-specific public and private projects that could have more direct impacts on the environment."

#### ALTERNATIVES

The County proposes three (3) Alternatives but the second and third Alternatives are so similar that from the standpoint of an environmental analysis they are virtually the same. Adding four evening runs from 6 PM to 11 PM or 5 runs during the same period may produce different operation consequences but the impact on demographics, land use, natural systems and growth will be the same. The analysis will only consider the impact of no evening service year round vs. year round evening service until 11PM. It is mentioned that "the County may initiate schedule changes reflective of seasonal demand." This does not clearly indicate if the EA will examine the impact of this alternative, however, rather than having to virtually identical Alternatives examined, the County should remove proposed Alternative #2 from analysis and replace it with two more reasonable Alternatives.

- New Alternative 4- Alternative that anticipates that the ferry schedule will be extended into evening hours only between June 15 and Labor Day.
- New Alternative 5- The County could honor its citizens and its Comprehensive Plan policies for the Guemes Ferry system by analyzing a Alternative which complies with the following adopted policy for dealing with demand:

"8A-5.3 To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on

demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule."

This policy does not allow for an expanded schedule; it simply allows additional runs when deemed necessary to handle traffic.

Prior to the "trial" schedule extension (No Action Alternative) the limited ferry schedule created a community of people on Guemes Island who were willing to live within its limits on travel to and from the island. The full time population was made up of older, retired persons, farmers, artists, and families who supplied their own transportation to and from the island when necessary in the evening. Nearly half of the existing homes are currently vacant most of the year, used primarily in the summer for vacationers. The limited ferry service kept island population growth at 3% between 1990-2000 while growth in the rest of Skagit County was over 29%.

Both proposed Alternative #2 and #3 will allow the same changes to population and growth. Evening service will allow commuters to easily travel back to the island after work. This will allow the island to become a bedroom community, promote growth, and alter the existing rural character and demographics of the community.

An Alternative which limits service to 6 PM in the winter months but expands the schedule in the summer is likely to have a very different impact from Alternative #3. It will accommodate heavier summer traffic patterns but is unlikely to affect growth and demographics. The winter ferry schedule will still limit evening travel for people who work off island, making the island unattractive as a bedroom community. Under this Alternative, new homes would be more likely used as vacation homes, taxing the overworked water supply less than full time residents. Population growth would likely be less than under Alternatives #2 & #3. It would allow the County the time and opportunity to implement changes to development regulations that would reduce total build out and develop other strategies to provide a sufficient, reliable water supply and waste disposal methods for existing and future residents. If this Alternative was found to keep water use at lower levels, it would likely have less impact on surface water that feeds aquifers and provides habitat for wildlife.

The final proposed Alternative would also be likely to produce no growth inducement and no additional impacts over the No Action Alternative.

#### SCOPE

The proposed EA scope is too limited. The following areas of enquiry should be added from WAC 197-11-444 to the list of scoping items to adequately analyze the impacts of the Proposal.

- I. Natural Environment
  - 1. Earth
    - a. Geology
    - b. Soils for on site waste
  - 2. Water

- a. Surface water runoff/absorption;
- b. Groundwater movement/quantity/quality;
- c. Public and private potable Water Supplies;
- 3. Plants and Animals
  - a. <u>Habitat for a numbers or diversity of species of plants, fish, or other wildlife</u>
  - b. Unique species
  - c. Fish or wildlife migration routes
- 4. Natural resources
  - a. Amount required/rate of use/efficiency
  - b. Source/availability
  - c. Conservation and renewable resources
- II Built environment
  - 1. Environmental health
  - 2. Land and shoreline use
    - a. Relationship to existing land use plans and to estimated population
    - b. Housing
    - c. Light and glare
  - 3. Transportation
    - a. Ferry Transportation system
    - b. Vehicular traffic
    - c. Parking
    - d. Movement/circulation of people or goods
  - 4. Public services and utilities
    - a. Fire
    - b. Police
    - c. Schools
    - d. Parks or other recreational facilities
    - e. Water/storm water
    - f. Sewer/solid waste
    - g. Other governmental services or utilities

#### PROPOSAL

Refer to report entitled "Land Use Impacts of the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule Extension" for probable significant adverse impacts of the Skagit County Proposal to permanently adopt the extended ferry schedule temporarily adopted May 30, 2006 (submitted by mail to Skagit County on Feb 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 on behalf of Friends of Guemes Island). The Probable Significant Adverse Impacts of the County Proposal are listed on Page 1 of the Report. Please add this report to the record on the Proposal and its Environmental Assessment (EA).

The Probable Significant Adverse Impacts listed and examined in the report may not be all the impacts of the Proposal. Only a thorough examination in a well done Environmental Impact Statement would disclose all the probable significant adverse

impacts. However, the probable significant adverse impacts listed warrant a Threshold Determination of "Significance" and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to discover and examine the extent of these impacts, particularly detailed hydrogeology studies on the island water system, and to develop mitigation methods to avoid the impacts of the proposed expanded transportation facility on the island and its residents.

## Anderson, Lummi and Shaw Islands

In the "Invitation to comment," the County mentions that they will be comparing Guemes island to other islands in Pierce, Whatcom and San Juan Counties. It is likely that this is in reference to the suggestion that Guemes Island should be compared to Anderson Island, Pierce County, Lummi Island, Whatcom County, and Shaw Island, San Juan County. While each of these islands is accessed by ferry and each has evening ferry service, only Anderson Island has recently extended ferry service to the evening hours. A description of the results of increased ferry service to Anderson Island is provided in "Land Use Impacts of the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule Extension."

Also submitted by mail were the following documents about Lummi and Shaw Islands:

- 1. Lummi Subarea plan and maps
- 2. Northern Lummi Island Hydrogeologic Investigation, Aspect Consulting for Whatcom County
- 3. Lummi Island Conservation Project
- 4. Lummi Island Ferry Schedule
- 5. Lummi Island Community Trust
- 6. Rural Character
- 7. Whatcom Watch, Lummi Island Subarea Plan Generates Controversy
- 8. Shaw Island Subarea plan and map
- 9. San Juan Buildout Analysis
- 10. Shaw Consistency Report

#### Lummi Island Land Use

Lummi Island is 8.8 sq. miles in area, and in 2000 it had 643 dwelling units and 822 permanent residents. The south 64% of Lummi Island is steep, mountainous terrain covered by forest, rising to over 1,600 feet. The area has 1,657 acres (29.1 % of the total land area of the island) in Protected trusts, the remainder is designated Rural forestry at 1 unit per 20 ac. This area has a small development of vacation homes served by surface water.

The north 36% of the island is low lying, zoned RRI allowing 1 unit per 5 ac inside the aquifer recharge area and 1 unit per 3 ac outside. It also has hundreds of non-conforming lots, which under the previous 1979 Subarea Plan are developable.

About one half of the total area of the island (2770 acres), is currently enrolled in the County Open Space tax program. The topography, protected status, zoning and open space tax status have served to limit growth to about one third of the island.

suggests that density alone may be too blunt a tool to protect both rural character and groundwater. The increased resident settlement rate in the 1990's suggests even greater pressures in the future on both rural character and groundwater resources. Other techniques may be necessary to protect the long-term rural character of the Island.

The LIPC has been looking at ideas such as:

- Density reductions (i.e., downzoning)
- · Lot consolidation for small non-conforming lots
- Rural design standards as potential means to ensure the long-term rural character of the island
- Purchase/transfer of development rights to preserve open space
- Allocating new development based on a sustainable annual growth rate over the next twenty years."

The County completed a Hydrogeologic study in Dec 2006 to inform decision makers on growth constraints and continues to work on the development of a new Lummi Island Subarea Plan.

#### **Ferry**

Scheduled ferry service was introduced in 1926 and daily service began in 1962 by the Whatcom Chief which has a capacity of 100 passengers and 20 vehicles. The crossing is .08 miles and takes 5 minutes. Hours of operation are 5:40 AM to 12:10 AM on weekdays (38 scheduled runs).

The Lummi Subarea Plan states:

"During the summer months (particularly weekends and holidays) when the ferry service demand far exceeds capacity and waits for ferry service can be as much as approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours."

"The ferry capacity and level of service are also important growth variables that could significantly encourage or retard future growth. (emphasis added) Currently the ferry is not able to maintain its adopted level-of-service and a separate ferry planning study is underway to resolve those level-of-service issues."

#### Shaw Island Land Use

Shaw Island is 7.7 sq miles and is primarily forested. Every effort has been made to retain its rural character. It had a resident population of 163 and 200 dwellings in 1995.

While it has daily ferry service from the Washington State Ferries, it has the fewest runs of any San Juan Island with service. The level of development and resident population are kept low not by lack of ferry access but by its Comprehensive Plan land use designations. The island has 5 zoning designations; Rural Residential-1/ unit per 5 acres, Rural farm Forest-1/5 ac, Forest Resource-1/unit per 20 acres, Publicly Owned conservancy-0 unit per acre, and Natural-1 unit per parcel of record. There are three small areas of small lots which have most of the existing residential. About half of the

acreage on the island is designated Conservancy or Natural and half is designated 1/5 ac or 1/20 ac.

It has no hotels or bed and breakfasts. Its Subarea Plan prohibits a wide variety of commercial uses such as boat moorage, food services, hotels, bed and breakfast camping and transient rental of residences to discourage the generation of transient population that would damage the rural character and place new demands on water, infrastructure and public facilities.

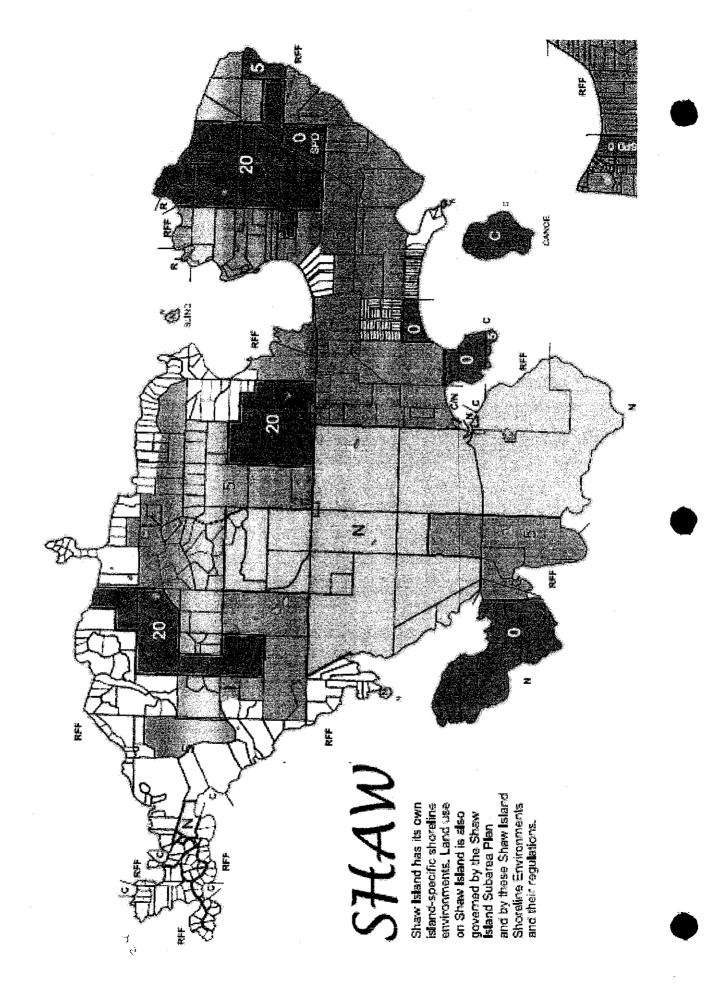
The attached San Juan County Comprehensive Plan, Appendix 1: Population Projections, Buildout Analysis, and Land Use Inventory, Table 28. Shaw Island Land Use Inventory. shows that the island has only 441 parcels of which 159 are used for residential. Of the 5,031 total acres on the island 59% or 2,988 acres are open space, resource, vacant or parks.

Table 27. Lopez Island Land Use Inventory.

Uses	Existing Parcels	Total Acreage
Common Area	47	56
Gov't Services	66	172
Manufacturing	4	19
Multi-Family	12	143
Open Space	3	65
Recreation	18	105
Resource Lands	229	6,008
Retail/Service	44	714
Single-Family	1,265	4,653
Transient Accom.	23	15
Transportation	25	68
Vacant	1,459	5,882
Parks	45	390
TOTAL	3,240	18,290

Table 28. Shaw Island Land Use Inventory.

Uses	Existing Parcels	Total Acreage
Common Area	4	12
Gov't Services	4	2
Manufacturing	1	10
Multi-Family	4	134
Open Space	9	328
Recreation	3	2
Resource Lands	28	1,038
Retail/Service	24	752
Single-Family	155	1,062
Transportation	3	1
Vacant	203	1,561
Parks	2	59
TOTAL	441	5,031



Gary R. Christenson AICP Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 982763

Dear Mr. Christenson,

I am writing this letter in response to the up coming decision on the Guemes Island Ferry schedule that is being reviewed. First and foremost, I support the current schedule with the late night runs.

When I purchased my home here on the island three years ago I moved here with the idea that the last ferry during the week would be at 6:00 p.m. and was willing to live with that seeing at that point there were no alternatives. Since then, I have seen the results and advantages to the later ferry service and I am in total support of a system that is more user friendly to the residents and property owners. Based on the advantages that I have seen I support in the following: the current expanded service as it stands now or secondly the reduced expanded service.

# Also, I would like to express the follow thoughts:

- ➤ I feel that <u>all</u> the property owners should be included in the decision-making, not just the island residents. After all it is the property owners who are paying the taxes and have a financial stake in the island more so then just renters who come and go with little financial risk.
- From what I have been able to observe, must all of new development on the island that has taken place in the last two years has been done on building permits that were obtained prior to the expanded hour ferry runs being put into place.
- There has been some concern about the cost of running the ferry which is understandable, but state, county and city services were never intended to be profitable. The ferry service is no exception. There is no question that it should be run as efficiently as possible but it was not set up to be a profitable enterprise, it was set up to service the people just like a bridge, school district, fire department, or police department.
- Since the Ferry has been running on the extended hours the general feeling is (in my opinion) that the added flexibility is great. I realize there are not a huge numbers of riders at night but you have to remember this is a small island with a small population. I think if you did a survey of the <u>property owners</u> you would find that they agree with the extended hours. Ferry hours are not what is going to control growth. Growth will be controlled by water and septic issues,

The other thing that needs to be said is all this controversy is hard on everyone. But feel the ferry (crew) workers have always tried to give excellent service. It seems when things don't go right they are the easiest ones to blame when in fact they try hard to keep smiling faces during tough times!

Sincerely

Fran M. Bohall

# 7370 Channel View Drive Anacortes,WN 98221 Bohall@cable rocket.com

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Gary R. Christenson AICP Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 982763

Dear Mr. Christenson,

I am writing this letter in response to the up coming decision on the Guemes Island Ferry schedule that is being looked at. First and foremost for information purposes I support the current schedule with the late night runs. When I purchased my home here on the island three years ago I moved here with the idea that the last ferry during the week would be at 6:00 p.m. and was willing to live with that seeing at that point there were no alternatives. Since then I have seen the results and advantages to the later ferry service and am in total support of a system that is more user friendly to the residents and property owners. Based on the advantages that I have seen I support in the following order, the current expanded service as it stands now or secondly the reduced expanded service. I have also in order to keep this letter short, outlined some thoughts about the process going forward below.

- 1. I feel that all the property owners should be included in the decision making, not just the island residents. After all it is the property owners who are paying the taxes and have a financial stake in the island more so then just renters who come and go with little financial risk.
- From what I have been able to observe, must all of new development on the island that has taken place in the last two years has been done on building permits that were obtained prior to the expanded hour ferry runs being put into place.
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The other thing that needs to be said is all this controversy is hard on everyone. But I have never felt that the ferry (crew) workers have not always tried to give excellent service. It seems when things don't go right their the easiest ones to blame when in fact they try hard to keep smiling faces during tough times.

Sincerely

Larry Bohall

7370 Channel View Dr Anacortes, WA 98221 Comments:

# FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

TO: SUBJECT: PHONE: FAX:	Grang R. Christonson AICP AND DEVELOPMENT Due  Gurms Island Lang Lours  360-336-9416	
FROM: PHONE FAX: DATE:	LARRY W BOHALL 360-588-9571 360-588-9571	SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR. FEB 13 2008 RECEIVED
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7370 Channel View Drive Anacortes, WN 98221 Bohall@cable rocket.com



Skagit County Commissioners Office 1800 Continental Place # 100 Mount Vernon, WA. 98273 SKÁGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 13 2008

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Dear Sirs and Madam:

We want you to know how much we appreciate the Guemes Ferry running late on week nights.

It really helps with doctor appointments, etc., to not have to worry about missing the 6 P.M. ferry.

The late ferry is a great service to the entire community, even thought some of the die hard backward looking people want it stopped.

Service is what the ferry is for and that is what it now does for all of us.

If people want the Island to remain the same, they should stop selling their land for more homes.

Many of the people who were opposed to the late ferry originally, now use it and want it to continue.

We really want you to keep up this service, even if you need to raise the ferry fees to do so.

Sincerely.

Verla Brown
Zane and Verla Brown

Edwin D. Zam Brown

5426 Guemes Island Rd.

Anacortes, WA 98221

(360)293-8539

cc: 3 C's, Public Works, PDS

FEB 13 2008

RECEIVED

Skagit County Planning & Development Services Director - Gary Christiansen 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

Dear Mr. Christiansen:

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We really want you to keep up this service, even if you need to raise the ferry fees to do so.

Sincerely, Edwin O. Zane Brown

Verla Brown Zane and Verla Brown

5426 Guemes Island Rd.

Anacortes, WA 98221

(360)293-8539

•

7699 Hideaway Lane Anacortes, WA 98221

February 14, 2008

RE: Guemes Island Ferry Service and Environmental Assessment

Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273 Fax: 360-336-9416

Dear Mr. Christensen:

Thank you for considering comments from all interested parties. I am a full time resident of Guemes Island; I purchased my home in September of 2006, after ferry hours had already been expanded. I enjoy very much the peace, quiet and beauty of Guemes Island, as do landowners and residents on both sides of the ferry issue.

I have a seasonal job in the nursery industry which requires particularly long working hours during spring. I work hard, and I depend on this job for the income that covers my mortgage payment and allows me to enjoy the life I live on Guemes Island. If the last weekday ferry were to run at 6pm, I would very likely need to move from the island. Plain and simple, I don't want to move.

We're all submitting our comments to you based on our own (perhaps selfish) "needs". I want expanded ferry service because I want to live on the island. Others do not want expanded ferry service because they believe the place they love to live will change as a result of this expansion. I understand and empathize with both points of view, but I also believe a middle ground can be reached.

Minimally expanded ferry hours will accommodate those of us who work longer hours off island so that we can live on island. Allowing for broader diversity of residents and allowing students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities off island are both important positives in my view. Limiting expanded hours somewhat and maintaining zoning/building regulations will help conserve resources and maintain the rural character of the island for all of us, for a long time to come.

I do believe that water, land use and efficient transportation are all important issues that should be considered in the Environmental Assessment. With regard for these issues in mind, I hope that many (not just 3) ferry service alternatives will be examined (contract with a water taxi company for certain runs on weekdays?), and that we can find one that serves all Guemes Island landowners and residents well, or at least serves almost all of us well. The plan that makes the most sense with all parties in mind is the best that we should hope for and expect.

Thank you again, Hum Chinh

Lucia Christie

2/10/08 Dandu, Kirk Johnson I moved to Guenes Island Eleven years ago for specific reasons. Rural atmosphere lock of traffic, noise of light pollution and minimal development were tops on my list. During-the past nearly two year "trial" of extended ferry hours I have not once felt the need Ito use the ferry after to pm M-Th. I am in from of the returning to the schedule that served I well for many years. This Island has limited resource. I am concerned that Skapit, County is not considering enveronmental impact, in making Solicisions regarding our soland Consider this my bote Ito return to previous 4-th repositablers amelin a Pratield 7778 Colidar Blod Chacotes Wa (7822) 360 293 3834

RECEIVED

February 10, 2008

Kirk Johnson, Team Supervisor Skagit County Planning and Development 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I attended today's Community Workshop regarding Skagit County's Environmental Review of Proposed Changes to the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule. I appreciate the opportunity to offer the following:

- As detailed at the meeting, the "No Action (Pre-Existing Plans and Regulations)" alternative is really not "no action". In response to an inquiry from the audience, the Public Works Director indicated that the last ferry run for Alternative 1 would be at 6 pm, period. Before implementation of the two year demonstration, there were often runs after 6 pm to assure that persons in line for the 6 pm ferry were not left behind. This difference from the "before" scenario needs to be explained in laying out the alternative or the title changed.
- The difference between Alternatives 2 and 3 is so insignificant to render them a single alternative with either 4 crossings or 5 crossings added to the "no action" alternative. I recommend that the proposed Alternatives 2 and 3 be combined into Alternative 3, and a new Alternative 2 be developed that adds 2 crossings to the "no action", one at 7 pm and one at 8 pm.
- The representations by many that ferry schedule decisions are singularly transportation decisions and not impactive on land use in their nature are bogus. To ignore the inextricable link between levels of transportation service whether highway, transit or ferry in nature is to defy or deny the thousands of examples of connectivity around the country and indeed the world. The County is correct by including in the environmental assessment the impact on land use attributable to extended ferry schedules.

I have two comments more on matters of style than substance.

- Presenting two documents both on the County website and at the meeting with different definitions of Alternatives 2 and 3 is at least sloppy if not worse. It leaves the clear impression that either the County does not know what it is doing or does not care, and aggravates your existing credibility problems on Guemes. Explaining away the difference as done at the meeting is not sufficient.
- As has been the case in both County undertakings that I am familiar with regarding the Guemes ferry, the presentations to the assembled audience on the island have been handled by the consultant. The appropriate responsible County personnel should make the presentation, drawing upon the consultant if necessary from time to time. Putting the meeting into the hands of the consultant while the attending County staff essentially sits like bumps on a log leaves the impression that either the staff does not know the substance of the undertaking, does not care about the issues involved or seek to establish a certain degree of deniability regarding the ultimate product.

Finally, I endorse comments made I believe by Glen Veal urging County staff and in particular Gary Christensen, the SEPA Responsible Official, to be true honest brokers of this process.

Sincerely,

Terry Ebersole

5308 West Shore Road

Guemes Island

Anacortes, WA 98221

FEB 11 2008

RECEIVED

February 7, 2008

Mr. Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA.

#### Dear Mr. Christensen:

As recent new residents of Guemes Island, my wife and I wish to go on record as being very satisfied with the current ferry schedule. The extended hours schedule has made it possible for us to participate in social and church activities during the week in Anacortes and on the mainland. And, while we do not have children or grandchildren in the area, we feel that it's important that island residents have opportunities to participate in their extended family activities. And, while we have had to leave events and meetings a little early sometimes, we realize the expense of running the ferry means we all need to be reasonable in our expectations of service. Our personal preference would be to have the current schedule remain in place. Our second choice would be to end the weeknight runs at 9 PM.

Mr. Christensen, I don't think the current ferry hours have led to the rapid growth on Guemes Island that some have feared. I think the limited water supply and limited number of affordable home sites on the island offer a far greater control to island growth.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our island and the ferry system. We compliment you and Skagit County for offering such excellent ferry service and having such a friendly, courteous ferry staff. As former Whidbey Islanders, we find the staff and service to be a refreshing change to the state ferry system we were accustomed to. Keep up the good work!

Bonnie Cel Derne

Sincerely,

Les and Bonnie Eelkema,

7885 Guemes Island Rd #24,

Anacortes, WA 98221

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTS.

FEB 14 2008

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Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services Dept. 1800 Continental Place

5 February 2008

Dear Mr. Christensen,

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

I am totally happy with the extended hours on the Guemes ferry. The few people on Guemes who cause so much trouble are blaming the new development on the extended hours. If they looked at the latest surge in development it was permitted when the ferry service ended at 6:00 P.M. The requests for permits have gone down since the extended hours came into effect.

What these introverted persons are looking for is a way to close out the rest of the world and practice their primitive way of life. The renters can not rent anymore because of the land values. The tax base on Guemes is a cash cow for Skagit County and since we have very few services here such as policing the roads for speeders and overweight trucks driving without getting the proper permits; the County's only cost is the double shift on the ferry system.

Please keep the late ferry so my high property taxes support at least one service. I will keep my eye out for the speeders and big trucks knocking down the high bank on South Shore Road.

Sincerely yours,

Anthony yox 5795 S. Shore Rd.

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 14 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RECEIVED

5 February 2008

**RE:** Guemes Ferry Extended Hours

Dear Mr. Christensen,

I support the extended hours for the Guemes ferry. I do not believe extended hours are in any way responsible for increased development on Guemes. Development will continue on Guemes as long as the County issues new construction permits. The island's population may end up as primarily retired persons, since the earlier hours are very tough on working people and families. I would prefer a mixed population for the island, not just retired persons.

When I mention zoning to long time residents of Guemes they laugh. Why should the County slow development on Guemes? The island is an important source of tax revenue for Skagit County. I believe the people who connect the early ferry hours with controlling development are wrong, the only way to slow or stop development is to demand the Commissioners stop issuing new building permits. I am glad we are having an environmental evaluation done for Guemes. This should put the Commissioners on notice about permitting the island to become overbuilt.

I know there is a segment of the population on the island who stake their reputations and egos on the idea that the late ferry will ruin the island with too many residents. Do they not see how wrong they are since they moved here with early hours and learned to live around the limited ferry hours. They missed the opportunity for night classes, family activities, sporting events, or just the convenience of later hours. I do not want Guemes to be spoiled just so we have convenient hours, but I do not believe the ferry is the responsible party. It is Skagit County.

Again I support extended hours for the Guemes ferry. I am willing to compromise with 8:30 P.M. or 9:00 P.M., if it is more cost effective. The Guemes ferry is responsible for transportation and should not be thought of as a form of development control.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Fox

5795 S. Shore Road



# Skagit County Community Workshop on Extended Guemes Ferry Hours

### February 10, 2008

#### Good afternoon.

My name is David Wertheimer. I am a resident of Guemes Island, and Secretary of the Friends of Guemes Island, a membership organization dedicated to the preservation of the rural character of Guemes Island. We have more than 230 dues paying members. Unlike another organization that claims to support expanded weeknight ferry operations, we are a visible, transparent group that maintains a known Board of Directors, an accessible website, and an active membership. That other organization has never made the real size or composition of its membership known, has never established a visible presence on the island or on the internet, and seems to prefer to operate by stealth in a clandestine, manipulative fashion.

FGI believes that the rights of the 75% of islanders whose opposition to the late weeknight ferry runs has been repeatedly documented have been disregarded, trampled and overrun by the whims of a small and vocal minority of self-serving individuals who seek to gain both economically and personally from the extended ferry hours. Those who favor late hours seem not to be concerned about the concerns of the majority, the extraordinary waste of limited taxpayer funds that extended hours creates, or the damage that is being done to the island's environment.

Friends of Guemes Island has been openly, assertively active on the legal front to protect the interests of the island we call home. We believe that extended ferry hours will promote development of the island that will permanently compromise the island's only water supply and irrevocably alter the fragile ecosystem that has kept the island in balance for centuries.

In November, 2007, Snohomish County Superior Court Judge James Allendoerfer he ruled unequivocally that the county must conduct a comprehensive environmental review before the two year "trial period" for the late night hours can be extended, even by a single day. In his decision, he wrote:

"At the end of the two-year trial period, on June 30th, 2008, the ferry schedule will automatically revert to its former 6:00 p.m. cut-off, and no weekday evening extension will again be considered unless and until there is a new, thorough, and SEPA compliant environmental review, including,

among other issues, the probability of induced growth, and the direct and indirect adverse environmental impacts resulting from the same."

The County now bears responsibility for production of a report that meets the threshold of an environmental review compliant with the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act.

Judge Allendorfer's decision was based in part on a careful analysis of the anticipated impact of late weeknight ferry hours that was completed by a land use expert as part of the court proceedings. Her report was filed with the court, and, I assume and certainly hope, the contents of this report are well known to those the county has hired to complete their own environmental review.

The extensive research in this report, dated May, 2007, clearly described and carefully documented the specific impacts of expanded ferry operations. These included:

• The ferry schedule extension is a transportation improvement that will be growth-inducing to Guemes Island

 Improvements to transportation links have a history of adverse impacts to land uses

Ferries, like road and bridges, promote growth

• Environmental analysis of the San Francisco Ferry System expansion confirms a ferry extension is growth inducing

 Kitsap County voters rejected a proposed ferry to rural landings due to acknowledged growth inducing impacts to rural areas

 The Anderson Island Feerry schedule failed to alleviate congested traffic as predicted and produced dramatic adverse impacts to the island and its population

The ferry schedule extension will remove an obstacle to access and will increase demand for property on Guernes Island

## Furthermore, this report clearly documents that:

- Current Washington State growth rates indicate strong demand for homes on Guemes Island
- Despite limited resources and no plan for accommodating new growth without significant adverse impacts to the island water supply, existing lots and zoning allow for significant growth on Guemes Island

 Even if the county were to adopt a complete moratorium on building permits, the island population could easily triple if vacant units were fully occupied

 A waterfront or island home available on Guemes Island is in high demand among home buyers

In relation to specific water-related adverse impacts, the report documented that:

 Growth will have probable significant adverse impact on the failing Guemes Island water system and remediation of damage to island aquifers would take years or decades to take effect

 Desalination plants would offer a solution with high costs to residents and potentially adverse impacts to the shoreline "critical areas" of the island

 Draw down of ground water may result in lowering or disappearance of existing island wetlands and the one stream on the island. This would have a probable adverse impact on island wildlife, including bird nesting areas.

New development will result in loss of green open space, increased impermeable surfaces, increased runoff and the need for surface water

collection facilities

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• Skagit County has failed to do state required watershed resource planning and assessments for Guemes Island and they have developed no strategies to provide sufficient water for existing and future residential populations on the island.

Finally, the FGI report documented these additional adverse impacts:

1992 nitrate levels in wells indicate that septic systems are contaminating
potable water and that increased population without a sewer system will
have a probable significant adverse impact on the health of marine habitat
and residents

Nightly traffic and parking on residential streets in Anacortes creates an

adverse impact to local residential areas

 Increased population from induced growth will increase demand for commercial and public services now unavailable on Guemes Island, including public safety, first responders, garbage and recycling services, school-related transportation, to name just a few. The costs of these services will further burden an already thinly stretched county budget.

Although we are pleased that the county is taking the court order seriously – as legally they must – FGI believes that more study is unnecessary. The documentation is clear. Extending weeknight ferry hours – whether to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., will have irreversible negative effects on this fragile island environment.

So, please listen to science, listen to reason and listen to financial concerns. And even if you select to ignore all of these, then at the very least listen to the voice of democracy: End the late night ferry hours that few people here want, that cost too much, and that are destructive to both the island's environment and way of life.

FEB 12 2008



Mr. Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

Dear Mr. Christensen:

I am a resident of Guemes Island, and Secretary of the Friends of Guemes Island, a membership organization dedicated to the preservation of the rural character of Guemes Island. We have more than 230 dues paying members. Unlike another organization that claims to support expanded weeknight ferry operations, we are a visible, transparent group that maintains a known Board of Directors, an accessible website, and an active membership. That other organization has never made the real size or composition of its membership known, has never established a visible presence on the island or on the internet, and seems to prefer to operate by stealth in a clandestine, manipulative fashion. FGI believes that the rights of the 75% of islanders whose opposition to the late weeknight ferry runs has been repeatedly documented have been disregarded, trampled and overrun by the whims of a small and vocal minority of self-serving individuals who seek to gain both economically and personally from the extended ferry hours. Those who favor late hours seem not to be concerned about the concerns of the majority, the extraordinary waste of limited taxpayer funds that extended hours creates, or the damage that is being done to the island's environment.

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- The ferry schedule extension is a transportation improvement that that will be growth-inducing to Guemes Island
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- Ferries, like road and bridges, promote growth
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- The ferry schedule extension will remove an obstacle to access and will increase demand for property on Guemes Island

Furthermore, this report clearly documents that:

- Current Washington State growth rates indicate strong demand for homes on Guemes Island
- Despite limited resources and no plan for accommodating new growth without significant adverse impacts to the island water supply, existing lots and zoning allow for significant growth on Guemes Island
- Even if the county were to adopt a complete moratorium on building permits, the island population could easily triple if vacant units were fully occupied
- A waterfront or island home available on Guemes Island is in high demand among home buyers

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- Growth will have probable significant adverse impact on the failing Guemes
  Island water system and remediation of damage to island aquifers would take
  years or decades to take effect
- Desalination plants would offer a solution with high costs to residents and potentially adverse impacts to the shoreline "critical areas" of the island
- Draw down of ground water may result in lowering or disappearance of existing island wetlands and the one stream on the island. This would have a probable adverse impact on island wildlife, including bird-nesting areas.
- New development will result in loss of green open space, increased impermeable surfaces, increased runoff and the need for surface water collection facilities
- Skagit County has failed to do state required watershed resource planning and assessments for Guemes Island and they have developed no strategies to provide sufficient water for existing and future residential populations on the island.

Finally, the FGI report documented these additional adverse impacts:

- 1992 nitrate levels in wells indicate that septic systems are contaminating potable water and that increased population without a sewer system will have a probable significant adverse impact on the health of marine habitat and residents
- Nightly traffic and parking on residential streets in Anacortes creates an adverse impact to local residential areas
- Increased population from induced growth will increase demand for commercial and public services now unavailable on Guemes Island, including public safety, first responders, garbage and recycling services, school-related transportation, to name just a few. The costs of these services will further burden an already thinly stretched county budget.

Although we are pleased that the county is taking the court order seriously – as legally they must – FGI believes that more study is unnecessary. The documentation is clear. Extending weeknight ferry hours – whether to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., will have irreversible negative effects on this fragile island environment.

So, please listen to science, listen to reason and listen to financial concerns. And even if you select to ignore all of these, then at the very least listen to the voice of democracy: End the late night ferry hours that few people here want, that cost too much, and that are destructive to both the island's environment and way of life.

Sincerely,

David M. Wertheimer, Secretary Friends of Guemes Island 11 February 2008

FEB 13 200 RECEIVED

Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

#### Dear Director Christensen,

I am writing in response to your request for community feedback-in regards to the question of extending Guemes Island ferry hours. Limiting runs past 6pm affects myself in that it puts our family home in jeopardy. My husband and I began living on Guemes in 2003. Then with the extended ferry hours and work options almost 2 years ago, my husband and I began planning and later building our dream home on the island. Thanks to the ferry's extended hours my husband is able to keep his current job and I am able to work a second job and complete evening courses towards an additional degree. Without extended ferry runs, we will need to consider relocation.

I have worked in community/social services for around 15 years now and have since come to believe that one of the largest determining factors in building a strong and thriving community is diversity. I feel that having the ferry end at 6pm each weekday evening plays a very strong role in who can and cannot live on Guemes Island. When looking at the lowest priced land or home currently listed on the island you will quickly see that anyone in a mid to lower income bracket could not currently realistically consider buying on the island, without working longer hours or a second job.

I understand that there are environmental impact concerns regarding increased growth due to extended ferry runs. It's my understanding that since the extended schedule has been put in place, there has actually been a decrease in new housing permits on the island. But besides this fact, I do not understand why extended ferry runs seem to be playing such a large role in regards to environmental impact concerns. It seems to me that concerns regarding environmental impact should be addressed directly and appropriately through proper zoning bylaws, not by imposing a restricted curfew on residents who require transportation to the mainland for work or study purposes.

I realize I may not represent the majority of members on the island. I am not retired. I am in my mid thirties and know many others my age with similar concerns. Though I may not represent the majority of island residents, I do represent myself and a percentage of the population who reside on the island. I appreciate your sincere consideration of my position. In writing this I wonder how others, even younger than myself, feel about the ending of extended hours and how this may affect their situations. Current and prospective college students come to mind.

I appreciate your reading of this letter. I realize I am not the most eloquent writer, but your consideration of my situation is very important to my family and me. My husband and I took a long time in considering where we wanted to live. After visiting Guemes Island, we chose this community for several reasons: its rural character, it's artistic community, it's environmental awareness and culturally vibrancy. We also chose Guemes for its accessibility. It's seems quite ironic to me that the day we are scheduled to move into our new home, April 1<sup>st</sup>, is the day we may might find out that extended ferry runs no longer exist; therefore, no longer making Guemes Island a viable living situation for our family. It is with great anxiety that I await your final decision on this matter.

Very sincerely,

Wendy Gingell

6224 Guemes Island Road Anacortes, WA 98221

FEB 14 2008

RECEIVED .

February 12, 2007

Gary R. Christensen, AICP, SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

Subject: Environmental Review of Proposed changes to the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule

Dear Mr. Christensen;

I have reviewed the Public Notice and Background and Overview for proposed changes in the Guemes Island Ferry schedule. My comments follow.

#### **General Comments**

1. I am pleased to see that the Planning Department is using the state environmental review process for analyzing impacts of extending the ferry schedule. However, it is most disappointing that this proposal is being made before the Commissioners have considered the Draft Sub-Area Plan. A significant citizen effort went into preparing this Plan so that it was both timely and consistent with the Countywide Comprehensive Plan.

I urge the Commissioners to consider adoption before making a decision on expanding ferry service. Although the Background and Overview states that the Draft Sub-Area Plan will be used in the analysis, unadopted policy is too easily ignored.

- 2. The Sub-Area Plan policy recommendations that should be considered include those in Land Use (Chapter 2), the Environment (Chapter 4), Shorelines (Chapter 5), and Transportation (Chapter 6), especially policy 6.11b. In addition, the written opinion survey results in Appendix A (available in Guemes Island Library) contain valuable information on growth attitudes and values of Islanders. This material, coupled with the existing conditions information in each chapter will underscore the immense significance of the implications of the proposed actions.
- 3. The purpose of this project is unclear. The Backgound and Overview says it is to address current and future demand for ferry service. At the February 9 public meeting, it was described as providing more choices for crossing the Guemes Channel and improving efficiencies in allocating staff. If the project is to deal with demand issues, then the EA should explain why the sequence of actions to respond to demand in the Countywide Comprehensive Plan policy 8A-5.3 is not being followed. This policy calls for first promoting car pools and non-motorized modes. Instead, the proposal is going to the last step, of expanding service. The EA should also clarify the purpose for the project and explain how the action alternatives, which would induce growth based on either rationale, would be consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA).

- 4. In addition to Countywide Comprehensive Plan policy 8A-5.3, particular attention should be given to transportation policies 8A-6.4, 8A-6.9, 8A-13.1, 8A-13.8, and 8A-16.1. These policies ask that analyses include acknowledging long and short term public costs of the project; assessing project impacts on the built and natural environment, including on rural areas; and consideration of community support for the project. These are similar policies to those in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan that were not addressed before the current two-year trial was implemented.
- 5. As a basis for analyzing growth impacts on a rural area from expansion of a transportation service, the EA should assess two similar situations. The Anderson Island experience following expansion of evening ferry service and the effects on the Gig Harbor Peninsula after the Tacoma Narrows Bridge was open.
- Given the controversial nature of the issues involved and in the interest of transparency and openness, the Commissioners should appoint a representative oversight body to assess the products in process. Failing to so can only invite further controversy about the quality of the information provided and distract from the decision itself.

#### **Alternatives Analysis**

- 1. Differences in end times of the action alternatives in the Public Notice and the Background and Overview should be clarified. The notice calls for the Alternative 2, (Reduced Expanded Service) to stop at 9:00 PM and Alternative 3 (Current Expanded Service) to stop at 10:00 PM. The Background and Overview says the end time for both Alternative 2 and 3 is 11:00 PM. These comments assume the Public Notice is correct as the end times for passengers and not the crew.
- 2. The two action alternatives would have quite similar impacts. Their 9:00 and 10:00 PM end times are likely to encourage commuter traffic from the same distances (Seattle to Vancouver, Canada). Thus, the impact analyses would be duplicative. The focus of the alternatives should be based on the environmental impact potential of each. WAC 197-11-440 (5). Section (b) calls for "reasonable alternatives"..."that could feasibly attain or approximate the proposals objectives, but at a lower environmental cost or decreased level of environmental degradation." This would be accomplished with an alternative having an earlier end time, resulting in a smaller commuter area from which growth would occur and presumably fewer and more easily managed impacts.
- 3. Action alternatives 2 and 3 do not appear to be consistent with WAC 197-11-440 (5)(b)iii. This section states that: "Reasonable alternatives may be those over which an agency with jurisdiction has authority to control impacts either directly, or indirectly through requirement of mitigation measures." Both alternatives are likely to profoundly affect rural character, for which little if any mitigation can be minimized or avoided once the Island community fabric is damaged. And as is mentioned below, to date the County has not yet adopted a mitigation measure to protect shoreline residents from seawater intrusion.

#### Elements to be Analyzed

1. The EA should clarify the linkage between transportation facilities and growth as a key element of the GMA.

2

- 2. The Natural Environment should also address habitat for plants and animals on the island and in its marine waters. Impacts should be discussed especially on State Sensitive species (peregrine falcon); State candidate species (including Brandt's cormorant, the merlin, pileated woodpecker, Vaux's swift, and western grebe); State threatened species (bald eagle); and federally threatened Chinook salmon.
- 3. The transportation element should use a level of service standard called for in the GMA for rural ferry service as a basis for analyzing the appropriateness of the proposed service. This is a similar basis for determining service need used for rural area road and park needs.
- 4. The Built Environment should analyze public service impacts. In particular, analysis of growth effects on fire protection, emergency medical service, and public safety (since the island currently has a volunteer fire service and no sheriff on duty). Order of magnitude costs associated with increasing these services should be included. If any of these services may need to be increased, the public and Commissioners should know how much is involved and who would pay.
- 5. The Built Environment should also address the need for additional public facilities. Specifically, whether the growth effects might require off-island water and/or sewer service, whether the wear and tear of the additional ferry runs would require replacing the ferry sooner, if roads may need to be widened: and whether more ferry parking and parkland would be needed. Again, if any of these facilities may be needed or need to be increased, the public and Commissioners should know how much is involved and who would pay.
- 6. Bullet 3 states that the effects of the rate and timing of growth and development on the island on the groundwater resource will be discussed. This needs to address the fact that the Interim Seawater Intrusion Policy, to prevent seawater intrusion, has yet to be adopted. Further, there has not been a comprehensive study of the aquifer sufficient to know where aquifer recharge areas are or the aquifer's water quality and quantity. Lacking this information, the carrying capacity of this resource is unknown and the resource protection needed is unlikely to occur. In addition, the potential effects of global climate change on the sustainability of the aquifer should be addressed. In sum, it cannot be assumed as the Background and Overview states "...that the critical areas on Guemes Island, including critical aquifer recharge areas, will continue to be identified and protected through implementation of adopted policies and critical areas regulations."
- 7. Particular attentions should be paid to shoreline impacts on both the aquifer and shoreline habitat since much of the new development will be in the shoreline areas of the RI zone. The analysis should address potential impacts to the species mentioned in item 2 above, as well as to a major food source for juvenile Chinook, beach spawning forage fish.
- 8. The Built Environment should also address growth impacts on the rural character of the Island, including population diversity and physical character. A description of the Island's vision for its future environment and GMA are on page 1 and 10, of the Sub-Area Plan, respectively. Question like the following should be answered. How would growth occur in a sustainable manner relative to the islands sole source aquifer and

3

other natural resources? What effects might sudden growth have on the diversity and social fabric of the island community if growth stems from a high income commuter population with little vested interest in the island community? What effect would this population have on the ability of low and moderate income residents to withstand an evitable accent of tax pressure?

Thank you for the opportunity comment.

Respectfully,

Roz Glasser

CC: Skagit County Commissioners

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SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 14 2008

RECEIVED

# THE GUEMES ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

February 11, 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP Skagit County Planning and Development Services 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, Washington 98273 POST OFFICE BOX **34** 54 1 ANACORTES WA 98221 FAX: 206/293-9697 2 9 3 - 5 8 1 5 206/299-9047

Subject: Environmental Review of Proposed Changes to Guemes Ferry Schedule

Dear Gary,

We thank you for holding the Community Workshop on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Some of our questions were resolved during the process, but we would like to make some additional comments on the proposed changes to the ferry schedule.

• Three alternatives are outlined in the EA: Background and Overview: Alternative 1, No Action: Jim Voetberg responded to a question that 6:00 p.m. would be the very last run of the day. In the pre-existing service, a second run was provided if necessary, so we would expect to have that re-instated as well.

Alternatives 2 and 3 are for all practical purposes the same, and can be expected to have the same environmental impacts. It would be interesting if some substantially different options were considered, such as a seasonally extended service during the summer months only.

As alternatives 2 and 3 may be expected to lead to accelerated growth on the island, we would like the EA to review similar situations in the State of Washington, such as the population growth and associated impacts on Anderson Island, Pierce County, due to expanded evening ferry service there.

- In the original objectives for extending the ferry service on a trial basis, a major point was made that the Guemes schoolchildren needed this service for after-school activities. Was an analysis made of the actual usage of the extended service by schoolchildren during the two-year trial period?
- It does not seem very meaningful to look at increase or decrease in number of property sales or building permits (as was brought up during the workshop), as we were dealing with a trial period only, and not a permanent change in ferry service. Any significant changes would probably be due to the economy.

- In the Comprehensive Plan 2000, Ferry Service, Policy 9A-8.7 states "The Regional Transportation Planning Organization should establish level of service (LOS) standards for ferry service." This policy appears to be missing from the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. We consider it important that such an LOS be established as a basis for analyzing the proposed alternatives.
- Comprehensive Plan 2000, Policy 9A-8.2 states "To meet future increases in demand, the County shall increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; and (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand." It appears that the County has ignored its own policies by instituting the two-year trial period without exploring the other options first.
- The Built Environment part of the Review should include Public Service impacts. In particular, analysis of accelerated growth effects on fire protection, emergency medical service, and public safety. The island currently has a volunteer fire department and no sheriff on duty. Costs associated with increasing these services should be estimated, and it should be clarified who would carry the responsibility.

GIET is the organization that obtained a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology for the USGS groundwater study of Guemes Island in the early nineties. In the intervening years we have remained actively involved in groundwater issues, including monitoring a number of wells and education of the public about usage of wells, capturing rainwater and related topics.

To establish the location of the major recharge areas on Guemes is a difficult task and it would require an extensive study, preferably by the USGS. As more of the large tracts of land are becoming available for development, we think it very important that such a study be undertaken in the near future, with the objective to adequately protect these areas.

Sincerely,

Marianne Kooiman

Ce: Kirk Johnson
Skagit County Commissioners
Lorna Parent
Gary Stoyka
Guemes Island Ferry Committee

Marianne Vooiman

February 1, 2008

Kirk Johnson, AICP 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273 Glen Veal, Charage Trans.
FEB 1 5 2008

Re: Ferry Committee Comments on Environmental Assessment –Extended Guemes Ferry Hour's Service

Dear Mr. Johnson:

This letter is in response to your request to have the Ferry Committee (FC) comment on the Environmental Assessment document and associated materials. These documents are being developed for the county to evaluate the Extended Service of the Guemes Island ferry operation. This extension is in the form of additional hours of operation, 6-10 PM Monday to Thursday, a 16% increase in service hours.

A major concern of the FC is that the Lead Agent and the Responsible Official making the Threshold Determination are essentially one and the same. It is noted that the Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) dated 7/27/06 (Brandon Black, Senior Planner) and the undated and unsigned addendum (Brandon Black, Senior Planner) was created by a person who works for the Skagit County Commissioners, who wants to make the extended ferry service permanent. WAC 197-11-926(2) stipulates "When ever possible people carrying out SEPA procedures should be different from agency people making the proposal." The intent of this language is to ensure transparency of environmental action. It is our opinion that the designated Responsible Official should defer decision making to the State DOE to make the threshold determination as to whether an EIS is needed. Below we make comment on various aspects of the EA document.

#### A Controlled Experiment:

The Record of Decision in the case of The Friends of Guemes Island vs The Skagit County Commissioners, October 5, 2007, states:

• "The first, and most appropriate time to meaningfully evaluate whether a ferry schedule change will or will not probably induce growth and development on Guemes Island is after a controlled experiment is conducted for a two-year trial period."

The County Resolution R20060184 included the process for evaluation of the trial, which did not include a process to evaluate growth. The specific evaluation of the extended service was set forth as:

"Phase III; Prior to 10/01/2008, Public Works shall summarize operational and financial results of the trial period for review and final action by the Board of County Commissioners."

The County then apparently did not intended to set up a "controlled experiment" regarding growth, but rather to understand what the impact would be on "operational and financial results" Therefore, the Ferry Committee worked on these issues and asked the county for their processes for financial and operational evaluation which have yet to be provided.

An experiment depends on a viable baseline data. Without a good baseline little meaningful comparison can follow. The County made two major changes in the ferry operation that altered prior patterns of ridership in the same year that the ferry hours were extended.

- 1. In January, 2006, the County substantially increased fares particularly those of the frequent commuter. Most categories of commuter passes went up over 100% in price. This unprecedented increase caused a major change in patterns of ridership. Many of the frequent commuters stopped taking a car on the ferry in favor of foot passenger transit. The impact was to reduce the number of cars carried by the vessel.
- 2. Simultaneously with the extension of runs, July 1. 2006, a major change was made in the regular hours of operation. Resolution 20040353 is the schedule prior to the extended service schedule created by R20060184. There are 130 scheduled sailings in R20040353 and 81 of these or 62% were changed. Particularly, the long standing 6:00 pm sailing was moved to 5:45 pm forcing many of these riders onto the 6:30 pm which was designated as the first run of the extended hours. It is not clear that these riders should be counted in the extended run operational data.

Because of the addition of extended hours with but one minimal public hearing, and no study of impact on the existing water situation on the island, there was a major backlash against the extended hours of operation. A boycott was organized in which islanders were encouraged not to use the vessel during the extended schedule. Opposing this boycott was a group advocating using the extended hours more just to keep the extended hours ridership numbers as high as possible. These political realities have also affected the outcome of the ridership data making comparison suspect relative to previous patterns of use. Determining growth using a comparison of the ridership metric is therefore suspect.

#### Staffing Needs and Demographics:

The Ferry Committee was aware that one of the major drivers for extending the hours of operation was the staffing issues. Due to a change in the operations during the day schedule, the County could no longer operate in one 12 hour shift, which had been the practice for years Monday through Thursday. Due to labor contract issues, the County then attempted a schedule that had one 10 hour shift and a short 3.5 hour shift that was awkward to staff. (As a matter of record, the County's first attempt to staff in this fashion resulted in a strike which stopped the ferry operation at 4:00 pm forcing the County to use a privately operated foot passenger boat loading and unloading from the shore.)

Those union staff on the short shift could not attain a full time position with benefits plus it was difficult to meet the guarantee in the contract of 176 hours per month of work which resulted in a substantial amount of non-operational time in which the crew had to be paid but did not have work to perform. The best solution to this problem was to extend the operation hours of the vessel Monday through Thursday to achieve two full shifts. While these staffing issues was not overtly mentioned in the Resolution establishing the extended hours, this staffing driver was sited in retrospect, at a 10 February 2008 meeting on Guemes Island, as a primary reason for extending the hours of operation.

#### Two Year Trial Period:

A two year trial period also appeared an arbitrary approach to a controlled experiment. The ferry committee predicted that what would occur during this tenuous period would only be a shift in the ridership pattern. A certain number of the existing ridership would transfer to using the later hours but the ferry system would not see an addition to the overall ridership. This also means counting the number of building permits in the two year period prior to the experiment and then counting those issued during the two years of extended operation would be an unreliable metric. Instead, and if the County was planning a controlled experiement, a study of demographics would have been a more reliable methodology. In other words, one would have to look at the quality of the ridership and its motivations as well as the quantity of riders but this was not attempted.

The ferry committee, in meeting with the County Commissioners was assured that financial and operational evaluation of the extended runs would be the applicable metrics for the evaluation and that the extended hours be "revenue neutral". The ferry committee built a model of these evaluation metrics and provided results to the County. To date, there has not been agreement between the Ferry Committee and the County on the cost of the extended runs

#### Rationale for Extended Service:

- The county has never attempted to determine "Level of Service" for the ferry or considered demand management criteria for scheduling the ferry. In fact the 'double run" concept to utilize demand management has recently been abandoned and replaced by fixed schedules. This has resulted in reducing the ferry capacity from 12 runs to 10 run in the morning Monday - Friday. The Ferry Committee has proposed many options to the county to increase capacity within the existing schedule without result.. It is clear that no attempt has been made to follow the logical sequence of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan (SCCP) 8A-5.3 prior to implementing the Extended Service to Guemes. The SCCP 8A-5.3, on ferry operation, states "To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island ferry by: (a) encouraging carpooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule". It is apparent that the order of schedule modifications listed to meet expanding ridership was intentional and should be of primary consideration. The FC recommends a full EIS to address alternatives (a), (b), and (c) to the action (d) selected by the County.
- 2. Paragraph # 1 of the EA states "it has been determined to be a non-project action under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)". This was one of Judge Allendorfer's findings in the recent court case, however it pertained only to the trial period of extended service This is emphasized in the Record of Decision, of October 5, 2007, which states, "... that the original environmental checklists and DNS documents dealt only with a temporary two-year trial ferry schedule change, and that if this is ever converted to a permanent schedule change it will be a whole new action requiring another complete environmental review with either a new DNS or very possibly an EIS, and the original DNS documents could no loner be relied upon."The addition of operating time is similar to adding a lane to a highway which is outside the scope of Categorical Exemptions (WAC 197-11-800) but clearly falls under WAC 197-11-704(2)(a)(i) Project Actions which states: "Projects include and are limited to agency decisions to license, fund or undertake any activity that will directly modify the environment, whether the activity will be conducted by the agency, an applicant, or under contract." The extension of the ferry operating day had an immediate impact on specific elements of the environment as defined in WAC 197-11-444, during the hours of 6-10PM Monday-Thursday, including the following: energy, light and glare, noise, transportation, vehicular traffic, parking, public services. These environmental impacts are caused by the ferry as well as the vehicles being transported, both while arriving at the Anacortes terminal and travel on Guemes Island roads. It is of historical interest to note that the December 1997, DEIS prepared by Skagit County, for the purchase of the present ferry, finds that the larger ferry would not impact growth while extension of the ferry hours would. The Ferry Committee recommends interviewing the residents around the Anacortes ferry landing and also those close to Guemes Island roads asking if there has been a change during the trial period in the above listed environmental elements.

The EA states that the county intends to conduct a "supplemental" environmental review of the proposed expanded ferry service and that each alternative will consider the island-wide impacts on growth and development. Judge Allendorefer's findings require another complete environmental review. It does not appear that the term "supplemental" is appropriate. It is assumed that since the original DNS was based solely upon the operation of the ferry (not the impacts on the Island environment) that only a more comprehensive review will meet define Threshold qualifications.

#### Potential Ferry Service Impacts in the EA

- 1. The first paragraph should be modified to include the requirement to follow SCCP 8A-5.3 (previously mentioned). The Responsible Official making the Threshold Determination (WAC 197-11-330 (4)) shall also carefully consider the need for an EIS. It appears, on the surface, that the intention of ruling that the Action is Non-Project is minimze review of environmental impacts that will -occur as a result of extending the ferry operation. Results from this action will be significant, adverse and profound in the following areas:
  - a. Impact on well/drinking water for residents: There are studies and examples that define the current and increasing problems with salt water intrusion into the aquifer. The County has been encouraged to set and control development standards that will protect current resident water rights and quality. While the County has written policies regarding protection of the sole source aquifer, these policies have not be enforced. Wells continue to fail on the island and there is no move by the County to restrict the drilling of individual wells..
  - b. Sub-Area planning; The Task Force on Ferry Schedules and Fares did not recommend extended service. The Ferry Committee, the Guemes Island Planning Advisory Committee, and residents in numerous public hearings recommended to delay decisions regarding extended ferry service until the Sub-Area plan is complete and in place. This recommendation went completely unheeded.
  - c. There are many unintended, potentially significant and adverse consequences of escalating growth on the island due to improved accessibility caused by extended ferry service. Some of these are: earlier capital expenditure for new ferry and facilities which would double the operating cost (studies have shown that larger ferries won't increase the capacity due to the short run), the loss of Island Rural Character which can not be mitigated, the failure of existing residential water wells with little recourse by the resident, escalating noise pollution, the need for Sheriff Department coverage on a full time basis, and the cost of ceveeloping alternate fresh water resources.
- 2. The EA states that "The adoption of a modified ferry service schedule by the Board of Commissioners will not, in and of itself, entail construction or other physical actions. Accordingly, the proposal is a non-project action under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA, RCW 43.21C)."We could not find a specific reference in this RCW which exempted the county from completing a full EIS. In fact RCW 43.21C.031(1) specifically states that an EIS shall be prepared on proposals that have a probable significant, adverse environmental impact.

#### **Description of Alternatives**

- 1. Alternatives to consider. Resolution #R20060184 states in attachment B that Public works shall summarize operational and financial results of the trial period for review and final action by the board of County Commissioners... At the hearing on this service the Commissioners stated that the service was to be "revenue neutral". During the first 12 months of operation the service operated at a net loss, after deducting estimated revenues, amounting to \$168,000. Although cost is not a direct environmental aspect, it should be included in evaluating overall impacts.
- 2. A fourth alternative needs to be included to be in compliance with SCCP 8A-5.3. This additional "No Action" alternative would consider the environmental impact of options to increase service on a "demand management" and "level of service" basis within the hours of operation specified in resolution R20040353. An alternative means of accommodating ridership growth would be to increase the amount of ferry service within the previously established operating schedule. This would reduce the cost of the operation without the expected environmental impacts. Failure to include

this alternative in the EA as a means to address growth does not comply with the SCCP. This alternative has been proposed numerous times over the past four years by the Ferry Committee as a solution to meet increasing ferry usage.

General Summary of the EA

There are several assumptions listed in the EA which are not supported by fact and need to be reviewed and shown to be correct if they are to be used. Below the FC has listed the most egregious of the assumptions.

1. "Ferry service was unchanged by the trial"- previously noted as incorrected.

2. The County did not create a process to evaluate growth relative to extended hours of the Extended Service as part of the trial. It is presumptuous to now fit results to a hypothetical experiment in order to prove an outcome.

3. "The Action is Non-project"—previously covered.

4. The Modestly Expanded Service alternative is the same as the Currently Expanded Service alternative since both conclude at 11:00 PM. Therefore these are not alternatives.

5. "Designations of zoning will remain essentially unchanged" – the commissioners have repeatedly tried to down zone both Fidalgo and Guemes Islands and it is unlikely that this attitude will change. The capacity for growth is not limited to the number of current parcels since larger parcels are regularly subdivided for development on the island with approval of the Commissioners. Please note the current Long CaRD application, File #PL07-0680, for the Race Bannon L.L.C property as an example.

6. Assuming that the County will adopt transportation infrastructure, including ferry service, that is consistent with, and supportive of rural designations, life styles and addressing environmental impacts is more than can be hoped for based on past practice. The Ferry committee has made several recommendations that "Level of Service" and "Demand Management" strategies be developed for the ferry operation to assist in establishing ferry schedules. To date these requests have gone unheeded since they are "not required".

7. "The EA will draw largely on existing planning and environmental documents". This does not consider the many recommendations to study Guemes ground water resources that the Commissioners have failed to heed. In considering "best available science" please include the hydrology work completed by Island County to learn about aquifer location, capacity and recharge areas as an example of good government stewardship.

8. "Critical areas on Guemes Island, including critical recharge areas, will continue to be identified and protected through implementation of adopted policies and critical area regulations". The County has not initiated any effort to identified aquifer recharge areas on the island and continually overlooks SCCP language.

9. The statement in the EA on page 2 under Potential Service Impacts: "The adoption of a modified ferry schedule by the Board of County Commissioners will not, in and of itself, entail construction of other physical actions" erroneously assumes that growth is not related to new transportation infrastructure (Extended Service).

**Growth Management Considertions;** 

WAC 197-11-330 (5), Threshold Determination Process states: "A threshold determination shall not balance whether the beneficial aspects of a proposal outweigh its adverse impacts, but rather, shall consider whether a proposal has any probable significant adverse environmental impacts under the rules stated in this section." Throughout history, transportation systems and

water availability have dictated where population will grow. Land use and the aquifer sustainability must be considered when widening the road to Guemes via extending ferry service to later hours of operation. There are several sections in the SCCP that must be taken into account in making the threshold determination.

- 1. The Transportation Section refers to many GMA mandated Goals.
  - a. The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environmental impacts and costs (CPP 3.3).
  - b. Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions and balances for both safety and service improvements (CPP 3.10). The extended service is costing tax payers \$168,000 per year to operate over and above revenues.
  - c. Comprehensive plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies, and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan. (CPP 3.5)
  - d. All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed and maintained to minimize noise levels (CPP 3.12). The noise extended to the island roads and community caused by the extended service and associated vehicle traffic must be considered.
  - e. Goal 8A-3.5 encourage private transit providers to continue to provide service that public transit cannot, including services to the County and State ferry systems. How was this considered when the extended service trial was put in place?
  - f. Goal A12 Demand and System Management Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system before major capital expenditures are made. Goal 8A-5.3 should be utilized to the fullest to postpone major capital expenditures for a new ferry.
  - g. Goal 8A-13.2 Directing Growth- Mitigate transportation impacts, wherever possible, by directing new development into areas where long term capacity exists on the arterial and collector systems. It has long been proven that transportation systems facilitate population growth patterns. "Build it and they will come." Many, many sales of property on Guemes fell through due to the last ferry Monday through Thursday being 6 PM. The possible escalation of ridership caused by extended service will cause earlier replacement of the ferry.
  - h. Goal 8A-13.8 Land Use Compatibility the planning, design, location and construction of new transportation projects and facilities shall consider and be compatible with adjacent land uses, as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, including natural resource activities and rural residential areas. Extending service hours of the ferry is like adding an additional lane on a road to accommodate existing of future growth in traffic.

#### 2. Rural Element

- a. The GMA mandate vision for rural goals characterize Guemes Island:
  - (a) . . . open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment.
  - (d) . . . provides visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities.
- b. "Rural development shall be allowed in areas outside the urban growth boundaries having limited resource production values (e.g. agriculture, timber, and mineral) and having access to public services. Rural development shall have assess though suitable county roads, have limited impact on agricultural, timber, mineral lands, critical areas, shorelands,

historic landscapes or cultural resources and must address their drainage and ground water impacts (CPP 2.3)." Public services to Guemes are limited to electrical power, ferry and county roads. The island has limited services and the County needs to establish the location of critical areas prior to continuing unregulated growth to occur. Many existing home water systems are now being adversely impacted by the lack of controls by the county on well drilling and use.

c. "Rural character shall be preserved by regulatory mechanisms through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact (CPP 10.6).' Given that the county plans to approve a CaRD development on 65 acres recently purchased, what specific county mechanisms are in place to protect the environment from expanded ferry service? A group of homes visible from the road using a CaRD would be a new type of development not found elsewhere on Guemes.

d. Goal A- Protect the rural landscape, character and lifestyle by: (f) assuring the appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided. In the case of the Guemes ferry the county has not develop a level of service (LOS) criteria nor is the extension of service appropriate for maintaining the rural landscape, character and lifestyle.

- e. 3A-2.1 "Manage development in rural areas through density requirements that protect and maintain existing rural character, natural resource lands, open space, critical areas, significant cultural resources, and water resources, and manage traffic volumes." The county needs to establish LOS criteria for the ferry system and utilize demand management data in establishing the ferry schedule. The level of service criteria should be to encourage the elements of 3A-2.1. Down zoning property for development beyond existing designations erodes rural character and lifestyles
- f. The GMA defines "rural Character"
  - i. (e) "That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling low-density development".
  - ii. (f) That generally do not require extension of urban government services.
  - iii. (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

#### Environment Element

- a. CPP Goal and GMA Mandate "Wetlands, woodlands, watersheds and aquifers are essential components of the hydrologic system and shall be managed to protect surface and groundwater quality. (CPP 10.4)" What evidence is there that the county has mapped the recharge areas and determined the capacity of the ground water system on Guemes so that growth can be managed to protect the aquifer quality and quantity? Should there be a moratorium on development until the aquifer system is understood?
- b. "Development shall be directed away for designated natural resource lands, aquatic resource areas and critical areas (CPP10.7)." Critical areas include aquifer recharge areas. The GMA requires counties and cities to develop policies and regulations that are based on "the best available science". 5A-1.1 Critical areas shall be identified based on the best possible science. Again, the county has failed to create and implement a plan that identifies the recharge areas on Guemes that are comparable to the steps taken in other counties; therefore the best available science is not being used.

c. Goal A – Protect aquifer recharge areas and well-head areas, ground and surface water quality and quantity for supplying all needs within Skagit County, including potable water for human use.

All of the above supports the need for the County's SEPA Responsible Official to make a threshold determination of significance (DS) that requires a full EIS if the extension of ferry service is to be continued. The FC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the EA and looks forward to an unbiased and transparent analysis of the environmental impacts of extending ferry service to Guemes Island.

Very Respectfully, Guemes Island Ferry Committee

Seul Veal & Chair

Guemes Island Ferry Committee, 7885 Guemes Island Road, Box #6, Anacortes, WA

### GIPAC - Guemes Island Planning Advisory Committee

7885 Guemes Island Road #9 Anacortes, WA 98221 360-293-5815 eyrie@cnw.com

February 7, 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP, SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning and Development Services 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

Subject: Environmental Review of Proposed Changes to Guemes Ferry Schedule

Dear Mr. Christensen,

After reviewing the aforementioned, GIPAC would like to comment on the proposals. First, we were pleased to note the county's reference to the Sub-Area Plan as one of the planning and environmental documents that will be used for the county's environmental analysis of the expanded ferry service. However, we believe it is pertinent to point out that the Sub-Area Plan has not yet been adopted.

GIPAC submitted the draft of the Sub-Area Plan in early August, 2007, in the hope that the county would begin the review process leading to a timely adoption of the plan. This seems a necessary first step before a permanent ferry alternative is selected, because the Guemes Sub-Area Plan is designed to supplement the county's Comprehensive Plan as an integral part of making decisions on issues like this proposal.

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan has also been referenced. We'd like to point out that certain policies in the Transportation Element of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan should be addressed in this process. These include policies 8A-5.3, 8A-6.4, 8A-6.9, 8A-13.1, 8A-13.8, and 8A-16.1. These policies are similar to policies in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan that were not addressed before the current two-year trial was implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,

Joost Businger, Chair

Cc: Kirk Johnson
Jeroldine Hallberg
Skagit County Commissioners
Guemes Island Ferry Committee

### E CARVENIENDES

PERIO PROSTHODONTICS/RESTORATIVE DENTISTRY

Northwest Dental Center 13344 - 1st Avenue N.E. Seattle, Washington 98125 Office (206) 364-8006

February 13, 2008

Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 13 2008

RECEIVED

Re: Guemes Island Ferry

Dear Mr. Christensen,

I have been a property owner since 1970 when we bought our first waterfront lot. We now own 190 feet of waterfront plus 25 acres on the east side of West Shore road. We love Guernes Island and appreciate the expanded ferry schedule.

We have close friends who are year around residents of the island. While many of those friends vocally oppose the expanded hours, numerous ones have confided that they like the convenience of the later ferries. I can attest that virtually all of our "part time" resident friends are in favor of the expanded schedule.

I am a practicing dentist in Seattle and we live in Everett. The traffic has become so congested on Interstate 5 that there is little if any chance that the later ferry schedule will cause an expansion of the population. It is simply too long of a drive to have Guemes Island become a bedroom community of Seattle.

This past summer my 90 year old father-in-law had a medical emergency at 9:00 PM on a week night. Taking him to Island County Hospital was an easy matter with the later ferry schedule.

Guemes Island is a wonderful part of our life. We will probably retire there. We pay a high tax bill to live on the beach. We don't receive much for our tax dollars other than the ferry. We are strongly in favor of the expanded schedule.

Sincerely,

E. Cary Halpin, D.D.S.

Northwest Dental Center 13344 · 1st Avenue N.E. Seattle, Washington 98125 Office (206) 364-8006

February 13, 2008

FEB 15 2008 RECEIVED

Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

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Sincerely,

E. Cary Halpin, D.D.S.

#### **PattiChambers**

From:

LindaHammons

Sent:

Friday, February 15, 2008 12:52 PM

To:

PattiChambers; James E. Voetberg

Cc:

Jacqueline Jonas

Subject: FW: Letter to Kirk Johnson, AICP, Re: GuemesFerry, etc.

Linda Hammons Assistant Clerk of the Board Skagit County Commissioners Administrative Building 1800 Continental Place, Suite 100 Mount Vernon, WA 98273 Phone (360) 419-3400 Fax (360) 336-9307

From: e78r9nein@netscape.com [mailto:e78r9nein@netscape.com]

Sent: Friday, February 15, 2008 1:27 AM

To: Commissioners

Subject: Letter to Kirk Johnson, AICP, Re: GuemesFerry, etc.

February 14, 2007

Skagit County Planning and Development Service

Kirk Johnson, AICP, Senior Planner-Team Supervisor

Dear Mr. Johnson; Re: Guemes Ferry Schedule

In my 35 plus years of property ownership on Guemes Island, I've attended an extravagant amount of meetings concerning the Guemes Ferry service and/or "Frequent User Card," as well as some "Natural and Built Environment "issues.

"Stated objective" and "efficient service" may sound like a technical explanation of the reason for the current "nonproject." But my years of experience tell me that what should be technical information presented to create dialogue between the county and all of us who own and use the ferry results in a surfeit of manipulative monologues from the ferry committee and supporters. So instead of objective dialogue we become enmeshed in subjective, emotionally charged words and actions which relegate a number of us to a minor role, if any. Emotionally, I am as irrevocably connected to the island, as I am to the place where I was born and grew up. As a non -resident property owner I make by far less daily demands on the "natural and built environment" of both places, than those who live there. I want the current expanded ferry service continued so I can stay on Guemes late and see the sun set, the stars come out and the moon's "path" reflected in my pond, and smell the night air and hear the evening quiet.

I trust that the "Elements of the Environment to be Analyzed" will be conducted in a professional, and scientific study, rather than subjective speculation. I've allowed nature to do its "thing" on most of my acreage all these years, even helped it with a pond, and paid the full whammy in county taxes. I think I've been responsible enough to deserve the privilege of staying out as late as I wish. No curfews please, forcing me to hurry home, except the final one that calls me to come stay with a great artist, nature.

Elenor Powers 336-5374, 317 E Lawrence, Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

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# Fax Cover Sheet

Sandra and Perry Higman 5019 Totem Trail Rd Anacortes, WA 98221 360-588-1354 Fax 866-272-0478

Send to: Skagit County Planning	From: Sandra and Perry Higman
Attention: Gary Christianson	Date: Feb 15, 2006
Office Location: Mt Vernon	Office Location:
Fax Number: 360-336-9416	Phone Number:

- □ Urgent
- ☐ Reply ASAP
- Please comment
- Please Review
- ☐ For your Information

Total pages, including cover:

#### Comments:

Re: Guemes Island Ferry

Thank you for soliciting written comments. My fellow Islanders are so passionate about the additional ferry runs, it's embarrassing to express our pro-evening ferry views in public.

We just wanted to say we frequently use, and very much enjoy, the evening ferries during the week and hope they will continue. We are in favor of having them continue until 10, but if that's not possible, until 9, and if that's not possible, AT LEAST until 7 when the crew gets their dinner break.

We prefer the current schedule to the on-demand runs because that way we can count on catching a boat, although in summer the lunch and dinner breaks create quite a backup. Not sure what to do about this, but I think the situation needs to be addressed.

Thanks.



Margi Houghton

(360)202-0041

Email: margi@windermere.com

Fax: (360)293-4049

www.margihoughton.com

#### Dear Gary Christensen,

I want to express my opinion for why I'm for the current expanded ferry service. I have lived full time on Guemes Island since 1981. I work full time as a real estate agent at Windermere Real Estate/ Anacortes Properties in Anacortes and I use the ferry daily. I feel that current ferry schedule really works for the people that need to commute on a daily basis. I love that I can count on the ferry schedule and that I'm not waiting for maybe a double run or that the lines aren't backed up for triple runs when I'm trying to get home. This was often the case when the deadline was 6:00. Everyone was trying to catch that last ferry and it caused incredibly long ferry lines. I often have to work later than 6:00 and I use to have to stay in a motel. Most of the people that are complaining about the ferry are retired or working on the island. The people that use the ferry on a daily basis for work and who are paying for the ferry need the more efficient expanded service schedule. It has made a tremendous difference for me. I have talked with numerous islanders who also really like current schedule.

The people that want the service to change back to the past schedule because they are worried about development on the island are not aware that we had a lot less Guemes Island property sales last year then we did in 2006. They should be more concerned about buying up the development rights of the old farms so that the rural feel of the island will remain. Focusing on the ferry to curb growth is not the answer. Growth will happen at the same rate. There will be a change of demographics since more retired people and professionals without kids will move to the island if the ferry schedule returns to the old schedule. In the past children were not able to attend after school sports and activites because of the 6:00 deadline. Now for the first time children can participate in sports. I use to see a lot of families move off the island because they were not able to handle the ferry schedule. I raised three children on the island and I know the hardship it is to always have to find places for your kids to spend the night in Anacortes. Sincerely,

Margi Houghton Many Hough 2/5/08

Richard Houghton 7538 Guemes Is. Rd. Anacortes, WA 98221 SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR. FEB 15 2008 RECEIVED

To: Gary Christensen
Skagit County Planning and Development
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Re: Guemes Ferry schedule

There are many viewpoints on this issue, and one's stance is certainly colored by one's situation. People that have to work in town every day will have a different perspective from those who are retired or work from their home. People with school-age children will view the issue differently from those who don't. Those who are tuned in to aquifer issues will be more concerned about impacts than those who aren't.

While nobody can predict the future, I understand that you have the unenviable job of sorting fact from emotion to set policy based on perceived needs and probabilities. The two essential questions facing you as I see them are 1: Will an extended schedule significantly drive development; and 2: Will an extended schedule put an unreasonable financial burden (through fare raises) on the residents.

My own situation, which impacts my viewpoint, is that of a twenty-seven year resident and twenty-year property owner. I raised three children on the island, and though we tried home-schooling our children primarily attended public school in Anacortes. We missed many after-school events because of the ferry schedule, and our children often spent the night in town with friends to attend important events.

My wife sells real estate on Guernes Island but we are not at all pro-development, and have encouraged many people to put property into conservation easements. We like to walk our dogs up the road in the evening, and are often annoyed by the late ferry traffic.

As a parent I feel that it is important for kids to be involved in school activities, for parents to be involved with their kids, and for kids to be able to sleep in their own houses. I worry that we would be selecting against families with children by returning to the six o'clock schedule. However, I recognize that housing prices may be accomplishing the same thing.

I am an environmentalist, and I think Steve Orsini's presentation about the aquifer was extremely important and damning of the county's approach to protecting it so far. I certainly feel that the capacity and quality of the aquifer must be considered in all decisions relating to development. However, it remains ambiguous whether changing the schedule will have a significant impact on development.

The fact that housing starts actually dropped during the trial period does not prove that there will be no impact because people may well be waiting to see what the final post-trial decision will be. We have spoken with a couple of people who are doing just 2

that. One was a couple with a business in Anacortes and the other was a couple with children. These are the two primary groups affected by the schedule. A later ferry schedule will definitely make Guemes Island more attractive to these groups of people. However, there is no proof that development will jump because of that. Development will still be influenced by market forces and the need of present residents to sell their properties.

It is certainly questionable whether a comparison with Anderson Island's experience with extended hours will apply to Guemes Island. Anderson Island is close to a major metropolitan area and much more susceptible to becoming a commuter island than Guemes, notwithstanding my previous comments regarding the increased attractiveness of Guemes to people who work or own businesses in Anacortes. The difference is primarily one of scale.

The county will have to balance the experience of Anderson Island with that of Lummi Island which is close to the larger town of Bellingham and has had a late ferry. It should also be considered that the Lummi dock is not as convenient to Bellingham as the Guemes dock is to Anacortes.

Much has been made of the survey which indicated that the vast majority of residents opposed the later hours, and the county should certainly respect that. It might be appropriate for the county to do a new survey now that the trial period is over, with a clear and honest assessment of the financial impact of the extended hours, along with ways that such impacts might be mitigated with a smaller crew, or additional contributions from the school district or other sources.

Finally, I would like to propose a compromise. Extend the ferry hours to a scheduled seven o'clock run, with overloads as needed. It would allow those who work a full day or longer in Anacortes to buy groceries or finish with clients. It would allow students to attend or participate in after-school sports and other activities. It would still prohibit people from commuting daily to work outside of the local area.

A balance might be struck between providing for the needs of a greater number of islanders without significantly impacting the environment or the cost of passage. Why was this not among the proposed options?

Sincerely.

Richard Houghton



FEB 06 2008

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Skagit County Planning and Development Services

1800 Continental Place

Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

We have lived on Guemes Island part-time since the mid 1960's and want to comment on the ferry issue. We would like to have the ferry schedule stay with the "Current Expanded Service Alternative" for several reasons.

First of all it allows our family access to our property during the week after 6:00pm. Before this current schedule we could not get to the island before the last ferry left. Now we have more freedom to come and go as we need.

We have not been allowed to participate in the Guemes Island Ferry Committee because we are not registered to vote on the island. That was purposeful so that only full time residents who do not want expansion of the schedule would control the vote. Renters that vote on the island can join the committee and yet they don't own property so they have more rights to vote on the ferry than the property owners? That doesn't make any sense. It is interesting to note that part-time islanders pay the same taxes as the islanders yet we use fewer services. The only service we partake of is the ferry and the road to get to our cabin. Our tax money pays for schools, roads, police and ferry service.

Next is the argument that allowing an expanded schedule will encourage growth on the island. Limiting the ferry runs is not the way to do that anymore than closing down the highway into Anacortes to keep outsiders from visiting after 6pm because the people don't want the traffic and the noise. The ferry is an extension of the public road system and the people of Guemes Island have no right to limit access. Applying zoning laws and the limited water availability is the proper way to accomplish this. For example, the residents of Vashon Island are also anti-growth but they haven't tried to control the Washington State Ferry by limiting the schedule. They have encouraged and demanded more ferry runs but they choose to limit growth by stringent land use policies and availability of water and/or septic systems. This has worked for Vashon Island. This would also work for Guemes Island.

In the time that the expanded service has been in effect, there has not been more growth on the island. In fact, there has been a slow down in the sale of property. This is a reflection of our economy and has nothing to do with the ferry schedule. There has not been an increase of crime that was also one of the fears of an expanded schedule. What has happened is a bigger window of time that people can get on and off the island. We all don't have to thunder down to the dock at the same time to make sure

we get off the island before the ferry shuts down, school kids can get to after hour activities in Anacortes and people can stop at the store after work or go to dinner and a show before heading home.

We would like to ask that the Current Expanded Service Alternative continue for the reasons stated above.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Larry and Mary Kirchner

4021 56 AV SW

Seattle, Wa.98116

10: Mary Christensen, (Sepa Responce Official) SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING This is in response to the Guernes EEB 08 5008 Island Ferry. We are in Jarvor of the Current expanded service, or atteast, a Seasonal expanded service. Both one dads

passed away last fall. Without the expanded service, it would have been So much harden to be there to help with doctors appt, hospice care, hospital visits, and family support, and all that goes along with aging parents. Os it was, there were many nights we couldn't make it back to the island. The new schedule helped us out alst. We look forward to wring it for more social events, dinners out, and movies in Unacortee 0076 Barbarat Dennis Koger 6026 South Shore Road anacortes WA.

11 February 2008

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FEB 13 2008

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Eric Lazo 6224 Guemes Island Road Anacortes, WA 98221

Gary Christensen, Director Skagit County Planning 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Request for comments on scope of the proposed Environmental Assessment (EA) Guemes Island ferry hours.

#### Dear Director Christensen:

Regarding the scope of the EA for Guemes Island Ferry I feel you should limit the scope to as small as possible. In addition I support permanent Expanded Service Options #2 and #3 making permanent Monday through Thursday extended ferry service.

- Since the institution of the extended ferry hours there has been no increase in building permits for Guemes Island. Extended hours are not encouraging land development.
- In a Guemes Island association survey approximately 45% of respondents favored extended service hours.
- Transportation access increase to the island has not led to an island population growth greater than that found in Skagit County during the same period.
- Managing area growth and land development are issues to be managed via zoning and land use planning. Not through restricting access to all Skagit County residents.
- Restricting transportation access to Guemes Island will not stop growth and development, it will only determine the type of growth the island experiences.
- Restricting transportation access to Guemes Island will discriminate against working families that need to travel to work daily and favor the wealthy that can afford second homes or do not need to work.

The challenge to the extended ferry service hours is a special interest group's attempt to limit ferry access to Guemes Island trying to create a private enclave for wealthy and retired individuals while destroying the economic and community diversity of Guemes Island in the process. The result is the creation of a "gated community" for the privileged and an economic prison for the rest of us.

- Restricting night weekday ferry access to the island eliminates my family's ability to live on the island and will require we sell our home and move. We will not be able to work, earn enough money and get back to the island in time for a 6:00PM ferry.
- Being in my 30's restricting night weekday ferry access to the island eliminates our ability to buy a home and live on the island. In recent years housing prices in Skagit County have risen to such an extent that a *minimum* purchase price for a house on Guemes Island is over \$300,000. For individuals wanting to live on Guemes Island there is a need to have regular access to employment in broader ranges in the surrounding counties to earn enough money to live on the island.
- Restricting night weekday ferry access to the island eliminates my family member's ability to take university courses in the evening to earn a bachelors degree in teaching.
- Restricting night weekday ferry access to the island limits my family member's ability to work in the evenings in Anacortes – working second jobs to earn enough to pay off university school debts.
- Restricting night weekday ferry access to the island limits me in building my business in the evenings after I finish my day job so someday I may be able to work for myself.
- Restricting night weekday ferry access to the island limits our ability to raise a
  family on the island and allow our children access community sports and
  extracurricular activities.

Restricting extended weekday ferry service to Guemes Island will discriminate against all residents of this area of Skagit County based on economic class. Leaving the island to further become a private enclave for the wealthy and force less affluent residents to move. This will not help develop a diverse, strong and economically representative community.

Best regards,

Eric Lazo

February 13, 2008

Mark Madden 4910 N Indian Village Lane Anacortes, WA 98221 PERMIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR FEB 15 2008 RECEIVED

Kirk Johnson, AICP, Senior Planner Skagit County Planning and Development Services 1800 Continental Services Mount Vernon, WA 98273

**RE:** Guemes Island Ferry Service

Thank you for soliciting comments on the proposed Guemes Island ferry service. I am sorry I missed the opportunity to attend the public workshop on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Even though I missed the meeting, I have strong feelings toward the transportation service options.

I am in favor of the Current Expanded Service. This service provides more opportunity for off island activities and better emergency service for all citizens living on or visiting their properties. The expanded service does not change the number of property owners on the island. It only affects the freedom of choice of the existing property owners and the delivery of services. Limiting ferry service to 6:00 PM is as restrictive as closing a mainline road to communities after 6:00 PM. It may be acceptable to some but it will cause hardship on many that desire or need transportation on or off the island for work or other activities.

I am a transportation engineer that has attended and chaired over 50 community meetings in neighborhoods and larger communities. I do not recall any groups so selfish that they want to restrict the activities of others as much as the group opposing expanded ferry service. This group is going way beyond reasonable to force others to live a lifestyle like their own. As an organized group they are able to get good turnout at meetings and letter writing campaigns but they do not represent the majority. Even their surveys are tainted because they have never included me with their questions although I have been spending time on Guemes since 1944 when my parents originally bought and have been paying taxes on two Guemes Island properties for the past six years.

Fortunately, small loud groups are not able to take away the freedom of others. It is really a stretch to think that a ferry running after 6:00 PM has a larger impact on the environment than a ferry running before 6:00 PM. I appreciate Skagit County's obligation for mobility that installed the current expanded service much like you improve transportation services in other parts of the county.

Thank you.

Sincerely.

Mark Madden, P.E., PTOE



SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 15 2008

RECEIVED | 12 February 2008

Gary R. Christensen, AICP
SEPA Responsible Official
Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GUEMES ISLAND FERRY SCHEDULE

In my decades of residence in Skagit County I have come to know how fiercely insistent County officials have been that the Guemes Ferry is the one transportation system in the nation free of impacts on any environment or community. It is with deep skepticism that I offer my comments, since I wager the conclusion of your effort will once more support and reinforce Skagit County's delusion.

How will reviewing what you already know offer new insights or a conclusion different from that your department reached in 2006? How will reviewing what you already know lead you to assess any differently the potential impacts on Anacortes and Guemes Island - growth and its effects on critical areas, rural character and community of Guemes Island - when you deny those impacts to begin with?

How will you determine the relevance and meaning of any information gathered in the 18 months of the extended service experiment? How will you factor the mitigating effects of doubled fares on ridership and population? Did doubling fares hopelessly contaminate your experiment? How predictive is your information of the next 25 years? How will you account for the lag time between learning of a now more accessible island and the decision, search and planning that precedes applying for a permit? Will you count subdivisions now underway but not yet permitted? How will you weigh the extended hours (or its experimental characterization) as a component in any decision to move to Guemes Island? How will you factor unique aspects of each island you might compare to Guemes Island, such as Lummi Island which, while similar in many respects, lies 20 minutes by car from the nearest town?

My point here is that Skagit County zoning, plans and policies relating to Guemes Island have been pulled from the ether and were never grounded in a deep understanding of the unique characteristics and limitations of Guemes Island. Skagit County declined to support the one aquifer study done in the early 1990s and has not prepared a watershed plan in the one part of the County that desperately needs one. Skagit County had clear evidence that the carrying capacity of several areas on Guemes Island was exceeded by 1990 and has taken no action to protect others.

And now Skagit County has been compelled to consider the probability that its proposed expansion of ferry service might have significant negative impacts. How will you assess the significance of an impact when you don't know how close to the edge we may be? After ignoring more than a decade of warnings, how assured are you that any seemingly modest impact might not prove to be very significant?

# joseph miller

The one option that might mitigate the impacts of a "commuter ferry" - a Summer schedule ending at 10 pm and a Winter schedule ending at 6 pm - was removed from the pre-meeting documents, in favor of studying the rather meaningless distinction between four and five runs after 6 pm. Please restore this as an alternative for consideration.

How do you characterize those who do the same thing over and over, expecting different results?

•

CC:

Sharon Dillon, Ken Dahlstedt, Don Munks

Skagit County Commissioners

joseph miller

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 15 2008

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12 February 2008 (AGIT CO

Gary R. Christensen, AICP
SEPA Responsible Official
Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

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And now Skagit County has been compelled to consider the probability that its proposed expansion of ferry service might have significant negative impacts. How will you assess the significance of an impact when you don't know how close to the edge we may be? After ignoring more than a decade of warnings, how assured are you that any seemingly modest impact might not prove to be very significant?

CC: 3 C'S, PDS P. Works

360.293.8878 : FAX 360.293.9697
CAMBRIAN @ CLEAR WIRE. NET

# joseph miller

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How do you characterize those who do the same thing over and over, expecting different results?

CC:

Sharon Dillon, Ken Dahlstedt, Don Munks

Skagit County Commissioners

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February 14, 2008
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FEB 18 2008

Skagit County Commissioners 1800 Continental Place #100 Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

**Dear County Commissioners:** 

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I am writing in regards to the proposed Guemes Island ferry schedual changes. Unfortunately, I am unable to be at the meeting on Sunday. I am a pastor and my Sundays are filled from the time I leave the island at 7:00 a.m. until I return at 8:30 p.m. I hope this letter will adequately express my concerns about the ferry schedual.

I grew up in Skagit County and have watched it grow from a small rural county to where it is today. There were many changes along the way some of which I didn't like and some of which I appreciated. But never once have I felt compelled to speak about those changes. However I have grave concerns about the proposed ferry changes. The current schedual is tough enough on my ability to do my job and still spend significant time with my family. As the schedual currently is it is a sacrifice for my family to live here. That being said we love the island and its beauty and if the schedual is maintained as it currently is we hope to enjoy it for the rest of our lives. When I moved to Guemes Island in October of 2007 I did not fully realize how contentious the ferry schedual was to some people. But the one thing I am certain of is that I support the current hours and if I had to choose, would like to see them extended not restricted.

In conversations I have had over the past year at least one person will no longer talk to me because I like the current schedual. Others, who like the current schedual, have said to me they do not talk about the ferry because they do not want their neighbors to dislike them or "flip them off" when they drive by. I keep hearing about how the majority of the islanders, in particular those who live their full time, don't like the ferry schedual as it currently is but when I read the replies to a questionnaire that was sent out I was pleasantly surprised to see that what Friends of Guemes say is probably not true.

I would suggest that there are some people on Guemes Island who will not speak out in support of the ferry schedual because of fear, some real and some imagined. This is not right so I ask you, the Commissioners, to not listen to the squeaky wheel but to do what is best for all and leave the ferry hours the way they currently are for it seems to me that if someone doesn't like the extended hours they simply don't have to use them. For the rest of us our ability to do our jobs, meet the needs of our families, and as a pastor, to meet the needs of my congregation do not need to be further restricted.

Beyond this I am convinced that if this were a regular road we would not be having this discussion, treat the ferry as the road it really is and stop the termagant restrictions being placed on many of us. If people are concerned about development on Guemes Island I believe the more important issue is water, without enough water development cannot happen and I could support that, with the right documentation, but I cannot support restricting the ferry hours anymore than they already are.

If you have any further questions you are welcome to contact me via my cell phone (360) 770-8245 or by e-mail at <u>denton-family@clearwire.net</u>. Thank-you for your attention to this matter.

Shalom,

Rev. Edward O. Denton

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

James E. O'Neil 7093 West Shore Drive Guemes Island Anacortes, WA 98221 13 February 2008

FEB 15 2008 RECEIVED

Gary R. Christensen, AICP SEPA Responsible Official Skagit County Planning & Development Services Dept. 1800 Continental Place Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

Subj. GUEMES ISLAND FERRY SERVICE-SEPA REVIEW

It is important that this review include the effect of any reduction from present schedules include its effect on the services, both private and public that are dependent on this transport service. Suppliers of sanitary services, electric service, plumbing repair etc. respond to jobs and normally like to complete any service without regard to "normal business hours". The extended hours have provided afternoon response for such services with the understanding that it is possible to complete action without the 6:pm ferry deadline.

The present schedule has also relieved the overload (multiple ferry) in most cases. This has decreased the use of the extended ferry traffic lanes on 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Anacortes. The number of actual crossings by the ferry has not increased by very much, and the schedule allows for planned participation in evening organizations and activities, both on the Island and in other parts of the County. Because a major fare change (for most Guemes residents) took place at the same time as the schedule was changed to include later ferry service it is difficult to access the separate effects of these two changes. But it is important that during the trial period there has not been any increase in traffic. It is mostly a service to all users by providing a longer period of service.

The Sub-Area plan that has been submitted to Skagit County for Guemes Island shows adequate respect for limiting growth. The ferry should not be the whip to insure that respect. It is important that there is an opportunity for change, and that it provide better not worse service.

Thank you.

SKAGIT COUNTY PERMIT CNTR.

FEB 07 2008

RECEIVED

## LEO E. OSBORNE MILKWOOD STUDIO 5166 South Shore Drive Guemes Island Anacortes, Washington 98221

5th February 2008

Mr. Gary R. Christensen, AICP, Director Planning & Development Services 1800 Continental Place Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Mr. Christensen, Greetings....and may I call you Gary?

I am taking time today from my own work schedule to write regarding the Guemes Ferry Schedule. The notice came to me from Planning & Development Services that the County is beginning an assessment of the environmental impact, etc., that is at issue with us islanders.

Gary, this is an issue that I have taken to heart. It was a sad day in my life when I saw the first what I call "illegal" ferry run at 6:30 pm. I believe it was "put on notice" that the Guemes Islanders were outraged at this act of undemocratic behavior from our voted in County Commissioners. You may well recall the black Mourning Veil that covered the ferry dock that evening. It was a response from the heart of people who love this island and this way of life that has been cared out here.

Personally I have been one to boycott using that late night ferry and I am proud as an American to say that I have not once succumbed to using it for any reason. You may think that a bit weird Gary, I don't know, but when something is as important to me as this is I take it very seriously. Maybe that is from being raised up in the 60's and having to stand firm against a lot of bad decisions made by many levels of Government!

With these feelings and the knowledge that I personally have from living some of my earlier adult years in Penobscot Bay in Maine where a lot of islands had to deal with these same kinds of issues, I feel that I must MAKE A PERSONAL REQUEST that the Guemes Island Ferry Schedule go back to what is was in the past. That is regarding the 6 pm shut off. I think that some adjustments can and must be made in the daily service and I believe that other accommodations may have to be made for certain times, etc.

I will tell you one thing Gary regarding this issue. For me personally I do not care about the people who come here in the summer as to whether it is made 'convenient' for them or not. Here is why. I have a property with a dwelling south of me toward the beach. When I purchased this home it was deeded onto that southern property to share a well and septic field. The owner of this lives in London and plans to move here in a year from now. For 5 years I watched over that property and helped if someone had to get in for a repair, or to get something. As a neighbor on this island I instinctively watch over what is around me. That is how we live on this and other small islands. To make a long, long story short, this man tore down an old metal shed and had a 3000 sq. ft. 'shed' built. This is what it is considered by the County, a shed....it incidentally has a second floor (which is set up to have a full bath and already has propane living room stove installed) which took out one half of our water view. When I emailed him to question what he was doing he took offense and had all his locks changed. I gave him the option of buying us off the deed and that looked like it would be the end of it. Unfortunately he is reneging after I

have now spent over \$35,000 to put in a certified septic system and it may end up that I will have to sue this man to get the promised monies from him, etc.

Why am I telling you this? Because the last time his wife spoke to us, when we thought we had friends in them, she was so pleased that the ferry ran late during the week because now it would be so much easier for them to come and go just like it was when they lived in Seattle previously! I am totally opposed to having this ferry that serves THE MANY year round islanders with great service being poorly managed to the extent that huge expenses in taxes from us and our County neighbors are paying for a FEW very imposing people to have a more convenient lifestyle.

Gary, my point is simply that this is an island and should be treated as one. That is its beauty! WE do not want it to be like Seattle or any other town on any mainland....we want as islanders to maintain that island spirit and place of belonging.

In conclusion I ask that 'NO Action Alternative" be used and that the Guemes Island Ferry schedule reverts back to what it was prior to the County Commissioners personal change to it.

Thank you for your attention to this And I hope you get hundreds of letters asking the same!

Very sincerely,

Leo E. Osborne

And I wish you all well, goodness and peace

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