

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 31, 2017
Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room
Mount Vernon, WA

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Joan Cromley, Town of Hamilton, Chair; Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt, Vice-Chair (arrived at 11:10 AM); Mayor Jill Boudreau, City of Mount Vernon; Mayor Laurie Gere, City of Anacortes; Commissioner Lisa Janicki, Skagit County; Mayor Steve Sexton, City of Burlington; Commissioner Ron Wesen, Skagit County.

1. Roll Call: Mayor Cromley called the meeting of the Growth Management Act Steering Committee (GMASC) to order at 11:07 AM. Roll was taken with a quorum present.
2. Approval of December 14, 2016 GMASC Meeting Minutes: Mayor Boudreau moved to approve the December 14, 2016 meeting minutes. Mayor Sexton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
3. Consider Adding to Agenda for Action - Skagit County Docket Proposal Received regarding Avalon Fully Contained Community: Kevin Murphy explained that the GMASC acted on the Avalon Fully Contained Community Proposal last year when it recommended not to docket the proposal to the Board of County Commissioners and the information about the docketing request has not changed. Mr. Murphy reported the County Commissioners asked the GMASC to consider adding the proposal to the GMASC agenda for action, so the GMASC's decision will determine whether the item is included on this meeting's agenda for action or not.

Mayor Sexton moved to add the received Skagit County docket proposal regarding the Avalon Fully Contained Community to the agenda for action. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wesen. The motion carried four to two, with Mayor Boudreau and Mayor Cromley opposed. Commissioner Dahlstedt arrived after the vote occurred.

Mr. Murphy reiterated that the Board of County Commissioners received a request to docket the Avalon Fully Contained Community proposal, and it is the role of the GMASC to provide advice about that request through a recommendation to the County Commissioners. Mr. Murphy stated the question before the GMASC is to decide whether or not to recommend docketing the proposal. The decision of whether or not to docket is made by the Board of County Commissioners.

Mayor Boudreau said she cannot vote to docket the proposal because it violates countywide planning policies. Mayor Cromley noted this proposal would require the GMASC to address its population growth allocations and countywide planning policies, and she questioned how many jurisdictions would be willing to adjust their growth allocations for this proposal. Mayor Gere said Anacortes is starting to implement their comprehensive plan and working to accommodate their projected increase in population. Because the city has not yet had the time to see if population growth is occurring as forecast, Mayor Gere stated that the proposal seems premature.

Commissioner Wesen also questioned how the GMASC will know if current housing strategies are effective, and asked how many years it will take to examine whether the current solutions

are working as intended. Mayor Boudreau said the time to examine reallocating growth will occur when vacant buildable areas are built up and more space is proven to be needed by future analyses of actual growth. Commissioner Wesen requested to define that trigger point that would cause the jurisdictions to revisit growth allocations.

Mayor Sexton expressed concern that Skagit County is not keeping up with market demands and said more units need to be built. Mr. Murphy suggested that changes to countywide planning policies, population allocations and a new non-municipal urban growth area would be necessary to make the proposal consistent with the countywide policy framework guided by the 2002 Framework Agreement. The proposal is a County docket request because it occurs in the unincorporated county, but it triggers GMASC policy issues that are broader than the Fully Contained Community being proposed.

Commissioner Dahlstedt stated he was disappointed this proposal was again coming to the GMASC for a recommendation. He expressed additional disappointment about a change that shrunk the non-municipal urban growth area at Bayview Ridge. Commissioner Dahlstedt said the proposal is inconsistent with the Commissioners' previous decisions and he voiced opposition to the proposal. Commissioner Wesen explained his rationale for supporting shrinking the Bayview Ridge urban growth area was due to the proximity to the airport and incompatible land uses. He then asked what other counties and cities do to adjust their growth allocations. Mr. Murphy provided an example of Snohomish County's method for reexamining their population allocations, and read the current population allocation adjustment procedures written in Skagit County's countywide planning policies. Mr. Murphy concluded by stating the countywide planning policies do not allow areas for urban growth outside of those listed in the countywide planning policies. Avalon is not listed, and adding the proposal as an urban growth area with a population allocation would require a policy change.

Commissioner Janicki stated that planning work is needed to avoid another gap in the county's housing shortage and discussed the need for a thoughtful, long-term solution to housing issues. Mayor Gere similarly expressed concern about housing gaps and encouraged the county to make decisions that are not project-specific.

Mayor Sexton stated the gap will be met when there is more supply to meet the demand for housing. Mayor Sexton said he believes the county needs more tools at their disposal to build units and address housing affordability.

Mayor Boudreau and Mr. Murphy discussed possible steps to update countywide planning policies, like developing a new work program and finding resources to complete that work. The GMASC and Skagit County planning department staff then discussed the details about the work, such as the potential for an Environmental Impact Statement to study the impact of Fully Contained Communities in Skagit County.

Mayor Cromley suggested additional analysis would be needed in addition to the Environmental Impact Statement to scope what questions the GMASC would like answered. Mayor Boudreau stated the proposal seems like a distraction and the region needs to continue implementing their comprehensive plans and monitor what happens.

Mayor Sexton moved to recommend the Board of Skagit County Commissioners docket the proposal regarding the Avalon Fully Contained Community. Commissioner Wesen seconded the motion. The motion failed three to four. Commissioner Janicki, Mayor Sexton and Commissioner

Wesen voted in favor of the motion. Mayor Boudreau, Mayor Cromley, Commissioner Dahlstedt and Mayor Gere voted in opposition to the motion.

4. Approval of 2018 Growth Management Act Support Work Program and Budget: Mr. Murphy reported that GMASC members, through interlocal agreement with SCOG, formalized the arrangement that SCOG staff provides administrative support for the Growth Management Act steering and technical advisory committees. Mr. Murphy reported that next year's proposed work program will include continuing work on the growth monitoring program and potentially adding to the methodology to include buildable lands and affordable housing components for the region. Mr. Murphy described billing practices and stated the same amount of funding is requested next year as in the current year.

Commissioner Wesen and Mayor Boudreau asked questions about the Growth Monitoring Program's deliverables. Mr. Murphy responded by stating the baseline Growth Monitoring Report will be available at the next GMASC meeting and future reports could include monitoring of affordable housing and buildable lands.

Commissioner Janicki moved to approve the 2018 Growth Management Act Support Work Program and Budget, and Mayor Boudreau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Discussion of Methodology for Growth Monitoring Program: Mark Hamilton presented the methodology for the Growth Monitoring Program. Mr. Hamilton explained the program has two separate parts: a methodology and a baseline report. Through his presentation about the methodology, Mr. Hamilton described how the baseline report will monitor growth trends in population, employment, and housing units across towns, cities and unincorporated Skagit County. Mr. Hamilton also presented the primary datasets and sources used in the methodology.

Commissioner Wesen asked questions about the unincorporated data used in the methodology as well as the process that is used to fact check whether the data is accurate. Murphy responded that the OFM data that is used already undergoes a fact checking process. Commissioner Wesen asked that data be included in growth monitoring reports to account for changes in housing units in unincorporated urban growth areas. Mr. Hamilton responded that he had already received data from Skagit County planning department staff for housing unit change in unincorporated urban growth areas and would include it in the report, with a note to get updated data every year for future reports. State Office of Financial Management housing unit data is only for incorporated areas and unincorporated areas, unincorporated urban growth area data is not included in these estimates. Mayor Sexton asked if there is a way to look back at historical population data for Skagit County to evaluate the accuracy of previous projections. Mr. Hamilton responded that staff would add historical projections of population growth in the growth monitoring program baseline report using projections from the 1990s and 2000s.

6. Election of Officers: Mr. Murphy explained that GMASC officers are selected at the first GMASC meeting of the year. The two positions, Chair and Vice-Chair, must include one city representative and one county representative. Mayor Sexton moved to nominate Mayor Wagoner to be GMASC Vice-Chair for 2017. Commissioner Janicki seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt is the current Chair of the GMASC for 2017, and Mayor Wagoner is now the Vice-Chair of the GMASC. The GMASC agreed to include election of a Vice-Chair for 2018 on their next meeting's agenda.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:09 PM.

Information: A report of third-quarter 2017 billings for Growth Management Act administrative services was included in the meeting materials showing the amount billed by the Skagit Council of Governments to each jurisdiction during this timeframe.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Murphy, Executive Director
Skagit Council of Governments

Date: _____

Approved:

Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt, Skagit County
GMASC Chair

Date: _____

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