

# GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room  
Mount Vernon, WA

## MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Joan Cromley, Town of Hamilton, Chair; Mayor Jill Boudreau, City of Mount Vernon; Mayor Ramon Hayes, Town of La Conner; Commissioner Lisa Janicki, Skagit County; Councilman Eric Johnson, City of Anacortes; Mayor Steve Sexton, City of Burlington; Mayor Keith Wagoner, City of Sedro-Woolley; Commissioner Ron Wesen, Skagit County.

1. Roll Call: The meeting of the Growth Management Act Steering Committee (GMASC) was called to order at 1:05 p.m. Roll was taken with a quorum present.
2. Approval of October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 GMASC Meeting Minutes: Mayor Wagoner moved approval of meeting minutes from the October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 GMASC meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Boudreau. The motion carried unanimously.
3. Skagit County Docket Proposal Received regarding Avalon Fully Contained Community: Kevin Murphy, Executive Director of the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG), reminded the GMASC that they had discussed this agenda at their previous meeting and the GMASC expressed at end of the last meeting that an action would be taken on this agenda at today's meeting. At the request of Commissioner Wesen, Mr. Murphy provided an update on the Housing Inventory and Transportation Analysis project that SCOG is now working on with a consultant. Mayor Hayes clarified that the GMASC is an advisory body to the Board of County Commissioners, with final action on the question before the GMASC resting with the Commissioners.

Mayor Sexton noted several pressures on the housing market and the lack of housing capacity to meet needs in Skagit County – the market is being compressed and housing is being made less affordable on the low end. Mayor Wagoner stated his opposition to the Avalon Fully Contained Community (FCC) and his concerns with traffic, character of the proposed development and competition for growth with the incorporated areas.

Councilman Johnson read a statement from Mayor Laurie Gere, from the City of Anacortes, who was unable to attend the meeting:

“Growth Management Act Steering Committee,  
These are my thoughts on the Proposed Avalon Fully Contained Community:

While the proposed Avalon Fully Contained Community may have no impact on Anacortes, I would like to propose a pause, to allow time for implementation of the recently adopted comprehensive plans. Many of us have spent the last two years updating our comp plans based on the 20 year population forecast and allocations, and we are working on regulations of implementation. We won't know for some time the outcome of the various changes in our comp plans, that's why the planners will be working on a monitoring program to provide information on growth over the next few years. I suggest we wait until after the first report from the monitoring program prior to making any decisions on this issue (approximately one

year). One of the main reasons we spent so much time on our comp plan updates was to accommodate forecasted populations within urban growth areas to preserve Skagit County's unique character and open space for future generations. While I am intrigued by the developers Fully Contained Community for Skagit County, I just want us to get this right for all of our citizens and communities."

GMASC members and Mr. Murphy discussed responsibilities of the GMASC under the 2002 Framework Agreement that established the committee. The procedural differences between recommendations from the GMASC on countywide planning policies and population allocations were presented by Mr. Murphy and discussed among GMASC members. Mayor Hayes indicated that when he presented the Avalon FCC proposal to La Conner's town council, they were unanimously opposed to the proposal. Mayor Boudreau stated that the current policy framework, which does not allow FCCs, is the correct policy framework for Skagit County and should not be changed to allow FCCs. Commissioner Janicki said that County Commissioners are in the odd position of providing advice on a decision that will be before them and recommended Commissioners' abstention from voting on the question. Councilman Johnson suggested the GMASC delay the vote for one year until data is available from the countywide growth monitoring report, which will provide a baseline on current development trends and provide accurate information on which to base a GMASC recommendation on FCCs.

Mayor Wagoner moved to advise the Board of County Commissioners not to docket the FCC proposal. The motion was seconded by Councilman Johnson.

Mayor Sexton said this is a missed opportunity for Skagit County – we have a severe housing shortage and the market needs are not being met. Commissioner Janicki agreed with Mayor Sexton, also noting the Avalon FCC would not utilize agricultural lands and has water and sewer available nearby. She also noted two recurring concerns she has heard with regard to this proposal: (1) why would Skagit County want to take a risk on a development such as this, potentially bringing in many people from outside the county; and (2) the need for affordable housing in the county and the limited ability of the Avalon FCC, as primarily a retirement community, to address this need. As is evidenced by the La Conner town council's perspective on this proposal, we do not have enough input from the broader community about what is the right decision at this point.

Commissioner Wesen reiterated that there is an affordable housing crisis in Skagit County. He stated his support for the Avalon FCC proposal and his view that clarity is needed for the development community to know how projects like this will be received in the future.

Mayor Boudreau clarified that the motion is intended to answer "no" to the question posed by the County Commissioners: is the GMASC willing at this time to consider revisiting the 20-year population forecast and allocations, and the policy framework they are based on, to allow for fully contained communities in Skagit County? Mayor Wagoner confirmed that is the intent of his motion.

The motion carried five to two, with Commissioner Wesen and Mayor Sexton opposed. Commissioner Janicki abstained from the vote.

4. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kevin Murphy, Executive Director  
Skagit Council of Governments

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Joan Cromley, Town of Hamilton  
GMASC Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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