

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
PIERCE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 23, 2019, 6:30 PM
Public Meeting Room, 2401 So. 35th St., Tacoma

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Benson, Chair
Jon Higley
Jeff Brown
Sharon Hanek
Kevin Rau
Kathryn Jerkovich

MEMBERS ABSENT

Julie Williams, excused

Clerk: Danica Williams, PPW-PALS

Other Staff: Jeff Mann and Dan Cardwell, Long Range Planning

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Copies of all staff reports and related documents under review were made available. Members of the public were in attendance.

Amendments to Pierce County Comprehensive Plan

The Pierce County Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan.

Application 891322 – Map Amendment

Applicant: Parks and Recreation

Two parcels, totaling 20 acres, would be rezoned from Agricultural Resource Land (ARL) to Parks and Recreation (PR). The Foothills trail would rezone from Rural 10 (R10) to Parks and Recreation (PR). That makes a total of four parcels all south of Buckley and north of Wilkeson.

Staff supports the proposal.

DISCUSSION

- There is currently a PR parcel next to the two parcels.
- Questioned if Parks really needs the parcels.
- Parcels designated as ARL shouldn't change.
- If parcels are part of Capital Facilities Plan, they can be excluded from normal policy.
- If Parks eventually sold the property, they would presumably be predesignated as ARL, but would have to go through some sort of process – it's not automatic.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

No members of the public testified

Application 891586 – Text Amendment

Amend the High-Density Single-Family policies of the comprehensive plan with the following:
LU-33.2 Allow for attached single-family development.

This would not increase density, only change the type of development allowed (both attached and unattached). This would affect the Parkland-Spanaway-Midland, Gig Harbor Peninsula, and South Hill Community Plans.

Staff supports the proposal.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

No members of the public testified.

Application 891585 – Text Amendment

Add the following:

LU-108.6.1 Establish a disclosure process advising property owners of possible noise impacts to property around JBLM.

Staff could work with Association of Realtors on exact wording of the disclosure document. This document would be required for every real estate transaction within the impacted area.

Staff supports the proposal.

DISCUSSION

- Perhaps the notification area should be larger than what is reflected on the map.
- Planes fly 500 feet above homes even across the bay.
- There are measurements involved - it is based on averages and focuses on the most concentrated affected areas.
- Artillery can be heard as far as Lakewood. Vibrations cause windows to rattle at times.
- This is a good start to the process of notifying potential buyers of noise impacts.
- Believe the military is spear-heading this proposal.
- It is modeled after a policy held by Whidbey Island.
- Association of Realtors plans to respond and will submit comments to Clerk.
- Questioned if there is something similar for the Thun Field area – however, this is a completely different type of aircraft.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Bud Rehburg, Graham, WA, lives just off the map. Helicopter landing zone near his home that runs 24/7. He doesn't mind, but some new neighbors may have issues. The notification area should be expanded. He lives within the Graham Community Plan area but the Graham Land Use Advisory Commission did not get a chance to comment because they are just outside the map. Most airports in Pierce County have zone overlays.

Tom Seigel, Superintendent Bethel School District, believes it is a good idea to notify potential buyers. He can hear engines, aircraft, and gunfire, and existing property owners know to expect it. Believes this is being done for the right reasons.

Public testimony closed.

Application 891627 – Text Amendment, Rural Schools

Allow schools to be in rural areas and serve students from urban areas; require future coordination between schools and counties; and allow the extension of public services (sewer) to schools in the rural area.

Private property owners can connect to the extended sewer if they have a failing septic system or if the property owner requests to (but meeting criteria). It will not be mandatory for existing homes to connect just because it's there.

Staff supports the proposal for the following reasons:

- Consistent with the RCWs
- It increases the school districts' ability to provide adequate capacity for educational needs.
- It won't increase density or revise the Urban Growth Area
- It will increase coordination between the County and school districts

DISCUSSION

- Schools are not required to be on sewer
- Schools and private property owners must pay for their own extensions

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Bud Rehberg, Graham, WA, was involved in the appeals and did not agree with the legislation passed by the State. He does have concerns over extending the sewer. Extending through certain areas could affect wetlands and could also cause flooding. If the school must be on sewer, it should be a tight line sewer line and not be available to the public.

Tom Seigel, Superintendent Bethel School District, has a site with 80 acres to house the new Bethel H.S. There is no sewer requirement for that school. The soil can handle a septic system and engineering can make it feasible. Franklin Pierce is the only school he knows that needs sewer. He read a prepared statement. The urban areas have no space left for schools. Jurisdictions would have to condemn and demolish 100 houses in order to make enough room. The school district supports the proposal and urges the Commission to recommend approval.

Mark Hood, 1201 Pacific Ave, is an attorney representing the White River School District. They also support the adoption of the proposal. However, they do not support the changes requested through the Graham Advisory Commission because those would only create more ambiguity.

Mary Urback, Sumner-Bonney Lake School District, submitted a letter of support and urged the Commission to follow legislation and to support the policy.

Karen Anderson, CFO Peninsula School District, has a site near the Urban Growth Area now that they would like to use as well. The School District supports the staff recommendation.

Robin Heinrichs, Executive Director Franklin-Pierce School District, feels it embodies the intent of the new State law. He does not agree with language proposed by the Graham Advisory Commission. Size and scale limitations should not be defined. He supports the extension of sewer to rural schools.

Public testimony closed.

Application 891589 – Text Amendment, CoLI Policy

Add policy designating Centers of Local Importance:

LU-11.3 Designate local centers as Centers of Local Importance (CoLI) and forward to Pierce County Regional Council for review and comment.

Currently, there are no CoLIs in the County. In the Community Plan Updates there are six Centers to be designated (if adopted). This will help the County compete for regional transportation funding.

Staff recommends approval. The Pierce County Regional Council also recommended approval.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Bud Rehberg, Graham, WA, this been going on for quite some time (regional body). Encourages looking at Elk Plain rack area as a CoLI.

Tom Seigel, Superintendent Bethel School District, said that anything to help compete for transportation funds is a positive element. There is no bus service on Canyon, beyond Walmart on Meridian, and none east or west.

Public testimony closed.

Application 891683 – Text Amendment, School Concurrency

To amend the Public Schools policies of the comprehensive plan:

GOAL CF-20 Coordinate land use planning and school district capital facilities planning.

Staff does not support the proposal and the Land Use Advisory Commissions concurred with the County's recommendation.

Some issues with the proposal:

- There are existing barriers to fund new schools (such as bonds, portable use, etc.)
- It could impact the County's land use authority
- Growth in the unincorporated areas due to moratoria
- State funding mechanisms which require using portables (you must prove that students are housed in portables in order to request and receive funding for expansion).

Staff supports the alternative language. It will strengthen the role of the County in addressing adequate school facilities by requiring the County to increase coordination with school districts.

DISCUSSION

- Pierce County should have minor control and not be involved in the decision-making.
- County lands – dedicated for school purposes.
- The committee members should be comprised of those who are intimately involved and knowledgeable on the issue.
- The County would not deal with location, funding, etc.

- This is meant to enhance the role of the County in helping school districts.
- The language was written while closely working with school districts.
- Suggested changing “shall” to “should” to soften the language.
- Districts rely heavily on population projections. They project out 20 years, but the 5-year mark is typically more accurate.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Bud Rehberg, Graham, WA, was at the meeting regarding Canyon Road expansion to the north. This has been a 20-year issue, especially in Bethel. The issue is the State is not fully funding schools. There needs to be a strong statement to Council that there are issues here to discuss, such as concurrency. Should be State, County, and schools working together.

Tom Seigel, Bethel School District, has over 200 portables housing over 5,000 students. It's too difficult to obtain 60% approval to pass bonds. Funds from impact fees pays one seat for one quarter in one portable. Concurrency is an issue and needs to be a continued discussion. County Council should revisit the impact fees – they are totally inadequate. Should pass Ordinance for simple majority approval of bonds. Master Planned communities should maybe provide their own school when enough students to warrant. The dedication of property is done elsewhere and can be beneficial.

Kathy Carlson, Bethel School District, there's inadequacies with State Reimbursements. The formula is driven to keep their contribution down. For example, their construction allocation cost is about half of actual costs; another element for County Council to visit. State does not recognize a lot of the costs incurred (permit cost, roads to put in, they also charge sales tax on construction costs) by the school. Impact fees are paid one house at a time and County passed some policies to defer payment up to 18 months. Even if got the school district got the money up front it takes 9-12 months to plan and get a portable on site.

Mark Hood, White River School District, supports the staff recommendation and they concur with the views expressed by Bethel School District.

Mary Urback, Sumner-Bonney Lake School District, land dedication could result in moratoria. There is a direct correlation between potential students created by a subdivision and a school. A policy to require dedication could be a positive. Could negotiate to mitigate the impact.

Jesse Gamble, Master Builder Association, is thankful the first version is no longer on the table. Excited to hear more on the staff recommendation.

Public testimony closed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM