

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - January 10, 2024

Roll Call: Linda Martin; Frank Jeretzky; Paul Ryan; Luke Currier; Mike Mills

Minutes: No minutes to review.

Public Comment

David Brunner, 2802 Oakes Ave, we have a neighborhood committee representing homeowners west of Stabbert Marine all the way to the bay. We want to be involved in the big work ahead of the Planning Commission in the Comprehensive Plan update. We want to bring attention to inconsistencies in the zoning in our area. He quoted from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. The group that we represent are concerned about the activity going on in the LM zone designation. We want to be involved; we want to make it a better area; and we want to connect the Guemes Trail to town.

Public Hearings

Other Business

Election of Officers

Frank Jeretzky nominated Linda Martin for Chairperson. Paul Ryan seconded. There were no other nominations for Chair herd. Vote: All Ayes, Commissioner Martin abstained.

Linda Martin nominated Frank Jeretzky for Vice-Chairperson. Paul Ryan seconded. There were no other nominations for Vice-Chair. Vote: All Ayes, Commissioner Jeretzky abstained.

Introduction to Planning in the City of Anacortes

John Coleman introduced the 2 new Planning Commissioners. He reminded all Commissioners to use their microphone and point their voice to the microphone, so that those attending in person and online are able to hear you.

Mike Mills said he's lived in town for 8 years. He's on the board of his HOA and has years of experience in other states. He was born in Burlington and raised in Sedro Woolley. He's looking forward to working on the Comprehensive Plan update.

Luke Currier stated he's been a resident since 2020. He grew up on Whidbey Island, has a degree from Western Washington University and loves this city. He's a CEO in Land Title and excited to support Anacortes.

Mr. Coleman commented that tonight he's going to talk about what the Planning Commission does - Planning Under the Growth Management Act (GMA). Our department is the Planning, Community and Economic Development Department. He reviewed staff and their duties. The Planning Department handles front line customer service with permitting and land use. We also have Economic Development that works with the Chamber of Commerce and the Port of Anacortes, promoting tourism. We support the City Council and the associated planning related committees. We administer the CDBG grant. We prepare, administer, and implement land use plans, policies, and codes that guide and regulate the physical development of the City, including long range planning, which will be under the Planning Commission purview.

He referenced RCW 36.70A, which adopted the GMA. This is a living document that is updated yearly. It includes the Comprehensive Plan, UGA boundaries and Critical Areas Ordinances. All cities and counties are required to have all 3 of these. The Anacortes Comprehensive Pan elements include land use, housing, economic development, environment & conservation, parks, recreation & open space, transportation, capital facilities and utilities. Land use includes the guiding goals & policies on how land is developed and an inventory of what we have and how we are going to get there. The Comprehensive Plan looks at 20 years worth of growth with the current plan spanning 2016-2036. The Comprehensive Plan must also comply with development regulations (zoning); comply with countywide planning policies and the County

Comprehensive Plan; the county officially designates the UGA; and periodic updates (next due in 2025). The GMA review is required every 10 years. We will examine 20 years worth of population and employment growth starting in 2025. There is a framework agreement between the county and all the cities on how this will be reviewed and addressed. It is a recorded document that we follow to update the planning policies. We are updating the UGA based on population & employment figures for all of Skagit County, then an analysis is done to see historical growth figures and model growth rates for each city. The Planning Commission will discuss those numbers in future meetings. Another component is to divvy up the population and jobs for each jurisdiction. This estimates the future growth for our town.

The cities then study how they will accommodate the projected growth. We look at each and every parcel in a land capacity analysis to determine if there are opportunities for growth. Once we know that, we can start the process of determining where that growth will go. Some options are zoning changes, expanding the UGA's, or a combination thereof. All of this will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. You'll need to look at the infrastructure capacity, critical areas, utilities, connectivity, etc. We need to determine how to best accommodate the projected growth. We will study all the utilities and how we will accommodate the growth. Police and Fire are also taken into account. What was just described is the concept of concurrency, which means you cannot put development in the area unless you can show that the necessary infrastructure will be provided as development happens. We are also required to update the Critical Areas Ordinance. Fortunately, we recently completed the update to this ordinance, so we will review that and determine if there are necessary changes. We also have to make sure the development regulations are in line with the Comprehensive Plan.

Land use regulations and zoning are in Title 19 of the AMC. In that chapter, you'll see what's allowed in each zone. The uses for each zone are defined and determined if they are outright allowed, conditionally allowed or not allowed. All those details can be found in this title. If it is a conditional use, it will either come to Planning Commission or Hearing Examiner. The building code is also in Title 19, but the Planning Commission does not review that. We adopted the Washington State building codes. Included are the specific energy code requirements for structures.

There are other plans that come before the Planning Commission for recommendation. The Planning Commission largely does legislative changes that affect things city-wide, such as the Shoreline Master Program, the Housing Action Plan, the Design Standards and Guidelines and the Zoning Map. Commissioners can talk to anyone at anytime about these legislative items; but for quasi-judicial decisions, you are not allowed to speak with the other Commissioners, family, public, applicants, etc. There will be additional training on these quasi-judicial decisions. He reviewed the zoning map. He pointed out that within each of these zoning designations, you can visit Title 19 and see what's allowed in each zone. Building requirements and design standards are also listed. The Planning Commission will review those and make recommendations to the City Council to update them. For Legislative Amendments, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to City Council. These are legislative actions that affect the entire community, not just an individual property owner or single piece of land. These include the Comprehensive Plan, Development Regulations, Shoreline Master Program, and other planning documents (ie HAP). For quasi-judicial hearings (see AMC 19.20), the Planning Commission will make recommendations to City Council or make final decisions on the application.

Regarding long range planning, John reviewed the items that have already been taken care of by the Planning Commission and moved to City Council. These include the R4 bonus height; SMP periodic update; HAP (we are in the process of implementing this); parklets (will be addressed in 2024); short-term rentals (will be coming to Planning Commission likely at next meeting); tree preservation (will start in 2024); the 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update, which will be coming soon to the Planning Commission. The 2025 update will include amendments based on the growth figures. He pointed out that cities now need to

plan for climate change, so that will be brought forward as well. We intend to do a greenhouse gas emission study and determine how they will be managed. We are required to study vehicle trips, so the Transportation Plan will look at this. Since we are adding a climate element to the Comprehensive Plan, we will look at resiliency and how to plan our infrastructure to withstand the changing weather regimes. For example, if there is flooding, how does that affect the waste water treatment plant which is close to sea-level. Another major component that we will be looking at is the housing element. We intend to use the Housing Action Plan in conjunction with the land use documents, to determine how to accommodate the future population. For example, if we are going to grow by 5000 people over the next 20 years, we need to determine how to accommodate that amount. The population projections now include a requirement to provide for specific income bands based on Area Median Income (AMI) of \$96,200 for a 2-person household. We have to analyze how to accommodate new housing for those income bands. We have to look at the real world costs today to determine the types of housing that will fit the needs of those in these income bands. Generally speaking, the housing types for income brackets below 120%AMI, will likely be multi-family, town-homes, and ADU's. He pointed out that the 0-30% AMI will be supported housing through other agencies; such as, the Anacortes Family Center, etc. Regarding the term missing middle, this references small apartment buildings, duplexes, townhomes, and smaller multi-family developments. The legislature passed a bill to make sure cities accommodate middle-housing. This doesn't apply to Anacortes, as we don't meet the minimum population of 25,000. In order to do our long-range planning, we anticipate having to make policy to address the missing middle. The good news is Anacortes is ahead of this because we already have regulations in place for many of these housing types to make this possible. He reviewed the changes brought before the Planning Commission recently to make these types of housing units allowed outright instead of requiring a public hearing and the CUP process. These types of changes make it easier to build the missing middle type housing in Anacortes. We need to determine how we can provide more affordable housing in Anacortes. The 2025 update process will have some contentious portions. We will have discussions about this and the public will have the opportunity to speak. The Planning Commission is the sounding board for all of these issues. Staff are here to support Commissioners during this process. He wants it to be very clear that any changes will come to Planning Commission for review, then to City Council for their decision.

Linda Martin asked where the population figures come from for the UGA and cities in Skagit County.

John Coleman clarified that he prefers the term "projections", in place of target because it implies we need to get there. The projections come from the Office of Financial Management. They do several studies and make a high, medium and low projection for each city. In 2016, Skagit County used the median numbers and we are using the median population projections this time as well. That goes to the county, then through the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG), which includes all jurisdictions mayors and the 3 County Commissioners. They divvy out the numbers for the Comprehensive Plan process. We are on target for what was planned for in the 2016 update. SCOG makes recommendations for population and job growth for each city. Twenty percent population growth is anticipated in the County (excluding City limits and UGA's).

Commissioner Martin asked if there is an opportunity to negotiate the projected growth figure we are given. Mr. Coleman clarified that if Anacortes doesn't want to accept the projected growth, those figures would have to be reallocated to other areas in the county and surrounding cities. Alternatively, if we don't plan for it, but we continue to grow, we run the risk of having to say people cannot build here or we run the risk of not having the infrastructure in place to handle growth. He pointed out that providing infrastructure is expensive. Under the GMA, cities are the place for population to grow. We are trying to avoid leap-frog development and sprawl, which have huge costs to infrastructure. We want to maintain farms, forests, etc. We recognize that there needs to be balance. Providing more services in denser areas is more efficient.

Paul Ryan asked if there are projections to annex property.

John Coleman clarified that is solely driven by the property owners. They can also petition to be annexed. Often it's police, fire and sewer services that drives the homeowners to want to annex.

Luke Currier asked what the advantages or disadvantages, from a city perspective, to annexation.

John Coleman said the advantages are that we achieve our goals of providing growth per GMA. There's a

myth that it's driven by cities wanting to annex to get the property tax, but taxes on new residential annexations don't pay for the impact on providing services.

Mike Mills asked if there was a timeline for the Comprehensive Plan update since this will be a complex issue.

Mr. Coleman stated we hope to have that available in the next 1-2 months. The Planning Commission will be the sounding board. We are creating a public participation plan. That will identify how people will be able to participate in this process. They will know how the process will work. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the public participation portion.

Adjournment: Adjourned 7:17p.m.