

Donna DePamphilis

From: Fred Klein <fklein@orcasonline.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 4:21 PM
To: Ingrid Gabriel
Subject: Population Projection Hearing

Hearing Date: June 16, 2017

To: San Juan County Council
San Juan County Planning Commission
via IngridG@sanjuanco.com

Re: Population Projections for Comprehensive Plan Update

Gentlemen,

I write to advocate that the “high” OFM population projection be used as SJC updates its Comprehensive Plan (CP)...and...that the boundaries for the Eastsound Urban Growth Area be expanded...in order to meet Goals 1 and 2 of the Growth Management Act (GMA); namely, to “Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner”, and to “Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.”

The rationale for using the “high” OFM projection relies on a number of factors, a few of which are summarized as follows:

- in addition to its resident population, SJC must plan for and provide for it’s large number of seasonal residents as well as the visitors attracted to this extraordinary tourist destination, none of whom are accounted for in the OFM projections, and both are trending upwards,

- the impacts of the Great Recession depressed all the trend lines generated during the past ten years, and I find the analysis by our DCD unconvincing,

- SJC remains in the center of a megalopolis extending from Vancouver, BC to Seattle, WA (if not Portland, OR)...Seattle being the fastest growing city in the US...this translates into pressure on the San Juans,

- technology continues to transform the traditional relationship between home and employment, thus allowing for increased in-migration of knowledge workers independent of SJC’s local economy,

- national media, supported by plenty of local advocates, continually hypes SJC; example: “San Juan Islands: The Hottest Luxury-Home Market In the Country” 5/19/17 Wall St Journal.

Let’s remember that San Juan County has the finite limits of a few small islands...and although current data is neither accurate enough nor comprehensive enough to define and measure concepts such as “build-out”, limits of “sustainability”, or “carrying capacity”, I believe that we’re a lot closer to them than collectively we imagine.

Planning based upon the “high” OFM projection, will help us come to grips with and grapple with the implications of growth and development on our collective future.

With regard to the Eastsound UGA, reconsidering its boundaries will allow Eastsound to accommodate the compact urban growth envisioned by the GMA in a manner consistent with the modest densities proven to be attractive and desired to enhance the village character.

In addition, it will create an opportunity to revisit the process followed when the UGA was created...a process which was in egregious violation of the principles of the GMA...and reconsider whether certain lands excluded from the UGA but served with sewer and urban-level services, and “characterized by urban growth” according to the decision of the Western Washington GMA Hearings Board, truly belong within the UGA.

With regard to the GMA goal to “Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.”, the spectre of accommodating the growth implicit with the “high” OFM projection will encourage us collectively to have what may be a difficult conversation concerning the plethora of non-conforming, under-sized, un-developed parcels in our rural landscape, the development of which, some would say, threatens the lifestyle of the islands and all the reasons we had for being here.

We’ll undoubtedly have many varied opinions of the impact of full development of our rural landscape...but the GMA goal is explicit and unequivocal...i.e., it calls for a REDUCTION of the inappropriate conversion of UNDEVELOPED land into sprawling, low-density development.

Yes, it will be a difficult conversation...but putting it off will not make it any easier.

Not having that conversation risks destroying the magic of the San Juan Islands...and our precious property values along with it.

Respectfully,

Fred Klein