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From: Alexandra Gayek <gayek07@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 17, 2022 10:58 AM
To: Lynda Guernsey; Comp Plan Update
Subject: Letter for Planning Commissioners
Attachments: letter to planning commission 8.17.22.pdf

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Hello Lynda,

Could you please forward the attached letter to the Planning Commissioners, to be read prior to their meeting on Friday, August 19?

Thank you very much!

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek

San Juan County Planning Commission
c/o Lynda Guernsey

16 August, 2022

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I write to urge you to reverse the Planning Commission's previous recommendations regarding de-designation of Forest Resource Lands per requests 18-0019, 20-0002 and 20-0004 , designation as Mineral Resource Overlay per request MRLO Egg Lake, and re-designation from Rural Residential to Rural Industrial per request 22-0001, during this Map Amendment review of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Since these recommendations were made, the composition of the Planning Commission and Department of Community Development staff have changed, information regarding legal problems for the county regarding these zoning designation changes has surfaced, skyrocketing development and tourism on each of the ferry-served islands in the county have clogged roads, parking, parks, air space and waters, and stretched Fire and EMS services to the limit, our ferry service has become even more broken and unreliable, and new extreme weather events and increased sea level rise have emphasized the urgency of prioritizing all possible efforts to slow climate change and protect islanders and their property from the impacts of severe weather events.

Comprehensive, seven-generation planning is called for to replace the haphazard, parcel-by-parcel approach our county has gotten away with in the past, when our human population was far smaller, the rate of development slower, and climate change less obvious.

It's time to reverse the trend of net loss of forested lands, agricultural lands, and further rural sprawl.

While it should be unnecessary to point out that we live on small islands with limited water and near complete dependence on the mainland for food and almost everything else we consume except the air we breathe, it seems that development is proceeding as if there were no limits to our land base, to ferry service, to water, to sewage capacity, to capacity for ground, water, and air density of vehicles, to residents being able to afford the increasing costs to all residents of development (note the current Public Works levy increase on the ballot,) to ecosystem and climate stability as more and more undesignated wetlands are filled, forests destroyed, shorelines armored, land made impervious, aquifers drained, noise and pollution increased.

Rural sprawl leads to more and more people being trapped and property destroyed by the impact of severe weather events such as floods and landslides, and by rising sea level. It increases county expense to build, maintain and upgrade infrastructure. It increases taxes, making the wealth gap even more extreme. It increases traffic, noise and pollution by making even more residences vehicle-dependent and by having constant construction--with its flow of noisy, polluting trucks--in previously quiet areas, while increasing stress--a significant health issue--for all who encounter and live with it. And, it makes it more difficult for firefighters, law enforcement, and EMS to reach all the people in need when simultaneous emergencies arise in different parts of an island.

Because of the total inadequacy of enforcement of our development code, de-designation of forest resource lands to allow increased development also opens the door to illegal increases in impervious surfaces--not to mention the legal, but still destructive increases; unrestrained and unmanaged forest destruction for fire protection of new structures and the creation of lawns--ecological deserts that are

maintained at the expense of more noise and pollution.

With these larger considerations in mind, when we look at each of the individual requests for zoning changes, we see even more problems. There are serious legal problems with each of the requests, as detailed by attorneys in submissions by Friends of the San Juans, confirmed by Washington State courts. This makes approving these changes even *more* expensive for the county and by extension, all the residents.

By taking a parcel-by-parcel approach, we are chipping away at our resource lands, destroying the county, and losing our climate resilience, creating the same effect as frogs in slowly heating water until they are boiled to death. This is the reason this approach violates the Growth Management Act and the whole idea of having a Comprehensive Plan. The same wise reasoning for staff to recommend against spot designation should be applied to reject parcel-by-parcel de-designation.

Staff also wisely recommended declining several proposals for redesignation of non-conforming parcels. This same reasoning should apply to the proposals by County Public Works.

There is a larger issue here. By deciding to change zoning designation after or because of non-conforming use, we only reward the long tradition of islanders' resisting government and thinking that and behaving as if "it's easier to say I'm sorry than to get permission." It's easier to ignore the code--regardless of its benefit for the common good, do whatever we want as if it has no impact on anyone else, and face the minimal-if-any consequences, than to follow the code. That thinking and behavior has not been limited to private individuals. It seems each entity, even governmental entities, thinks they have valid reasons to be the exception to the rules. But, it's more like the story of the blind men and the elephant. (The story in which one man holds the tail and thinks an elephant is a rope, another hugs the leg and thinks an elephant is a tree, another touches the side and thinks an elephant is a wall...) Each person or entity clings to a limited perspective backed by clear, tangible evidence, and can't see the whole elephant--the big picture. We got away with that thinking and behavior when there were far fewer of us. The impacts to the rest of us are more obvious now, and will become ever more painful if we keep making exceptions, decisions for the benefit of the individual or the few at the expense of everyone else, decisions for short term benefit at the expense of generations to come.

Thank you for reading and considering these points, and applying the wisdom of declining all of the proposed Map Amendments to the Comp Plan Update.

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek
Orcas Island