THURSTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes October 10, 2007

1. **7:01 PM CALL TO ORDER**
Chair Roper called the October 10, 2007 special meeting of the Thurston County Planning Commission to order at 7:01 p.m. Commissioners present provided self-introductions.

**Attendance:** Chair Joyce Roper, Commissioners Tom Cole, Liz Kohlenberg, Chris Lane, Liz Myers, and Scott Nelson  
**Excused:** Commissioners Kathleen O’Connor, Craig Ottavelli, and Rhenda Strub  
**Staff:** Aimee Swenson-Farrow, Mike Kain, Scott Clark, Celinda Adair, and Recording Secretary Cheri Lindgren  
**Others:** Marie Cameron, Veena Tabbutt, Grant Beck, Tami Merriman, and Chuck Denney

**7:01 PM APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
**MOTION:** Commissioner Cole moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Kohlenberg seconded. Motion carried. *(It was noted that the agenda should reflect approval of the September 5, 2007 minutes and not September 19, 2007.)*

2. **7:01 PM PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS** *(Not associated with topics for which public hearings have been held.)*
There were no public comments.

3. **7:02 PM APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
**MOTION:** Commissioner Kohlenberg moved to approve the September 5, 2007 minutes and accept the audio as the official recording with the following correction: remove Marie Cameron’s name from “Staff” attendance on page 1 and add an “Other” category listing Marie Cameron. Commissioner Cole seconded. Motion carried as amended.

4. **7:03 PM CALENDAR (TENTATIVE) AND ATTENDANCE**
- October 17, 2007: H/W/A: Urban Growth Area – Market Factor; W: Critical Areas (Wetlands)  
- October 24, 2007: Special Meeting: H: Grand Mound Water System Plan Update *(Commissioner Cole tentative)*  
- November 7, 2007: W: Critical Areas (Important Habitats)

5. **7:06 PM STAFF UPDATES**
Aimee Swenson-Farrow reported a tentative calendar was included in the meeting packet.
It should reflect a special meeting on October 24, 2007. The November 21, 2007 meeting will be cancelled.

7:08 PM Mike Kain distributed two Development Services Department organization charts. One is proposed to take affect on January 1, 2008. The other reflects the department’s existing structure. Mr. Kain reviewed differences between the two charts, answered questions, and briefed members on the status of new and current positions.

6. 7:18 PM H/W/A: 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS
(Staff: Aimee Swenson-Farrow)
Ms. Swenson-Farrow reviewed public hearing procedures and materials contained in the public information packet. The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approved the official docket of amendments at the beginning of the year. Not all docket items are addressed in the amendment proposal. A separate briefing for legislative amendment CO-5, Grand Mound Water System Plan Update is scheduled later in the meeting. A separate public hearing is proposed for October 24, 2007.

Ms. Swenson-Farrow provided an overview of the proposal and analysis information on the following comprehensive plan amendments:

- OLY-1: Utilities & Environment Chapter Updates
- OLY-2: Transportation Chapter Update
- TUM-1: Parks and Recreation Plan Update
- YELM-1: Introduction & Transportation Chapter Updates

7:30 PM Tami Merriman, City of Yelm, described the proposed changes in the Transportation Chapter (YELM-1). Staff incorporated additional changes based on public comments from Intercity Transit and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). WSDOT indicated that Yelm incorrectly stated SR 510 and SR 507 were highways of statewide significance. They are highways of regional significance. WSDOT also indicated that Yelm incorrectly stated the level of service (LOS) for concurrency. It should be LOS D. In response to the latter, Ms. Merriman noted for concurrency purposes, the Yelm City Council designated and accepted LOS F for the downtown core in 1995. Yelm has identified polices for street connectivity including the Yelm Loop project. The portion of roadway between the future intersection of SR 510 Yelm Loop to the Bald Hill/Creek Street intersection has been identified as a Strategy Corridor in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). She reviewed the definition of strategy corridors. Typically, strategy corridors are already at the maximum lane width between intersections, or are bounded by existing land use or environmental features that preclude further widening. Peak hour vehicular congestion in the corridors is likely to exceed levels considered acceptable in other areas of the transportation system.

7:34 PM Ms. Swenson-Farrow reported the final amendment concerns the annual Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) 2008-2013 update. She distributed copies of a public comment
Keith Moxon, Gordon Derr, Attorneys at Law, representing JZ Knight, distributed copies of a comment letter to Commissioners. JZ Knight has serious concerns about Yelm’s failure to responsibly address significant traffic problems and other impacts associated with development. An amendment purports to “adopt levels of service for roads and facilities and services that reflect the preference of the community.” However, that is not the case. Yelm proposes that LOS F (failing) should be considered acceptable within the urban core of its urban growth area (UGA). Yelm’s current comprehensive plan includes language that is not included in the proposed amendment that states, “Development standards shall identify the method of LOS measurement and implementation, and identification of the urban core, as well as the mitigation plan and alternatives for transportation facility planning and development. Development standards shall be identified to implement the urban core traffic mitigation plan for appropriate sections of Yelm Avenue and Highway 507.”

Yelm has not adopted development standards, identified or implemented mitigation plans or alternatives, or defined urban core. Yelm’s unjustified reliance on LOS F as an acceptable standard has caused and will continue to result in development that is unrestrained by any meaningful LOS or concurrency requirements as mandated by the Growth Management Act (GMA).

Mr. Moxon reviewed new residential developments totaling approximately 5,600 units approved and/or planned for in Yelm. When applying LOS F to proposed development, Yelm does not require any documentation to demonstrate that specific mitigation has been authorized, planned, funded, and implemented as required by its own comprehensive plan, and as required to meet the six-year deadline for achieving transportation concurrency under GMA. Each county or city required to plan under GMA must include a transportation element that includes LOS standards for transportation facilities. LOS standards are enforced under the concurrency requirements of GMA.

Mr. Moxon referred to letters from WSDOT and Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) attached to his letter. WSDOT’s letter suggests modifying the text of the policies to reflect the adopted LOS of D for state highways within city boundaries.

Mr. Moxon said Yelm’s proposed amendment to adopt LOS F as an acceptable level of service within the undefined urban core should not be approved because it does not comply with the minimal requirements of the GMA.

Steve Kline, P.O. Box 1971, Yelm, provided a summary of a September 17, 2007 Yelm Planning Commission meeting where it reviewed and finalized changes to the
comprehensive plan. The state designates SR 510 and SR 507 as highways of regional significance with a LOS D standard, which is consistent with the RTP. Staff informed the Planning Commission that Yelm’s Transportation Chapter must conform or be consistent with Thurston County’s Transportation Plan. At the conclusion of the Yelm Planning Commission meeting, Mr. Kline said he asked how the Commission plans to include LOS D for SR 507 and 510. Staff acknowledged there was a conflict. Nothing else was said or done to resolve the conflict that Yelm’s plan must identify a LOS D standard. The minutes from that meeting do not reflect staff’s direction. The only change made in the final draft minutes forwarded to the Yelm City Council was to remove the word “acceptable” from that policy paragraph. LOS F is still in the proposed plan for final approval. Traffic gridlock in Yelm is allowed to continue. The community deserves a LOS on roadways that are able to pass at least a LOS D. There are at least eight intersections in Yelm with LOS F. The lower threshold is not consistent with WSDOT’s standard or with the Regional Transportation Plan. An immediate remedy to adhere to a LOS D standard would be for Yelm to reduce incremental and additional local traffic to roads by no longer accepting or approving applications for large traffic generators.

Mr. Kline outlined an example where Yelm’s Planning Department is using faulty assumptions that are not in compliance. In addition, Bald Hills Fire Commissioner Owen informed the Yelm Planning Commission that public safety is compromised because of the length of response time caused by Yelm’s traffic. At the July 24, 2007 Yelm Council meeting, Mayor Harding told the public that 67% of the traffic in Yelm originates from outside the city limits and it’s just not a Yelm issue. Mayor Harding suggested the community reduce traffic by leaving earlier, which is an outrage. Current traffic volumes result in safety issues for children and pedestrians. He asked that the County consider the issue as well. A multi-jurisdictional approach is needed to address traffic issues. Leaving the bypass as part of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a disservice and disingenuous to the Yelm community and its citizens. Mr. Kline requested that the County no longer permit the Yelm Planning Commission, City Council, and Planning Department to allow lower LOS standards on SR 507 or SR 510. Yelm has used an unfunded bypass in the STIP since 1992 to mitigate traffic growth. Strategy corridors negate LOS on Yelm Avenue. Yelm does not have the ability to undermine LOS intentions per the GMA. Mr. Kline submitted a copy of his letter to Chair Roper.

7:58 PM With no further public testimony, Chair Roper closed the public hearing.

Discussion ensued on what Yelm has done to move towards a LOS D standard established in the Regional Transportation Plan in 1998.

Grant Beck, City of Yelm, explained LOS standards are identified for two different purposes. Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) establishes a planning level service calculation and not a concurrency LOS standard. Concurrency LOS is established by the local jurisdictions. LOS F is the adopted concurrency standard in Yelm but it’s not how all intersections are currently operating. As the transportation
system expands and additional connections (such as the mini-loop between 103rd and Collins Road) are made, LOS at any intersection can change over time even with growth. A concurrency standard is a snapshot and not a planning LOS.

Discussion followed on transportation modeling, Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) required for new developments, LOS at intersections during certain hours of the day, strategic corridor characteristics, and planned improvements to Yelm’s transportation system. Mr. Beck explained that for concurrency purposes, WSDOT and TRPC use a two-hour peak between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday. Yelm uses a 15-minute peak during that two-hour period for concurrency analysis. Yelm’s calculations for concurrency purposes are consistently lower. In the last six months, TIAs show the signal at Yelm Avenue operating at LOS D. He clarified that the mini-loop proposal is not unfunded. The project is funded through the right-of-way phase. Yelm is actively pursuing construction funding ($35 million) during the 2009 legislative session.

Mr. Beck commented that Yelm’s actions have been badly characterized during the public hearing. Staff has recommended significant traffic improvements for development proposals. Yelm does not allow development to rely on the “big loop” to avoid concurrency requirements.

Commissioners reviewed development proposals outlined in Mr. Moxon’s letter, including a 5,000-unit master plan community. Related to the latter, Mr. Beck reported the proponent is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that should be released by the end of the year.

Commissioner Lane said he’s unable to comprehend another 5,000 vehicle trips per day from 568 new residential units (separate proposals).

Chair Roper asked about other options Yelm is considering to attain a LOS D standard. Mr. Beck stated Yelm has no control over SR 507 and SR 510 within the corporate city limits because 63% of the traffic is regionally-based. The Stevens Street connection will bring the main intersection up to LOS D.

Discussion ensued about origination and destination of traffic passing through Yelm, TRPC’s camera traffic study (license plate survey) conducted two years ago to determine commute patterns, and completion of the two-lane mini loop roadway that will re-route commuter traffic around Yelm and provide additional capacity on Yelm Avenue.

Chair Roper asked whether staff also considers traffic impacts resulting from development in southeast Thurston County that passes through Yelm in its reports to the hearing examiner. The concern is trying to achieve a LOS D standard that was established in 1998. Mr. Beck clarified that the planning target relates to the entire
corridor and not just an intersection or a piece of the corridor.

**8:28 PM** Commissioner Kohlenberg expressed interest in reviewing TRPC’s camera traffic study.

**8:33 PM** **MOTION:** Commissioner Kohlenberg moved to recommend approval of the annual CFP 2008-2013 update to the BoCC. Commissioner Cole seconded. Motion carried.

**8:34 PM** **MOTION:** Commissioner Lane moved to recommend approval of OLY 1: Utilities & Environment Chapter Updates, to the BoCC. Commissioner Myers seconded.

Commissioner Kohlenberg referred to a comment letter from Tom Cook and suggested the following friendly amendment to the motion:

- Replace the word “should” with “shall” within policy statement ENV 9.4 found on page 4 of Olympia’s proposed revisions document
- Revise proposed ENV 6.3 policy to state in part, “When a development proposal is within McAllister Springs, Allison Springs, or other designated wellhead protection areas, coordinate …”

The makers of the motion agreed to the friendly amendment and recommended approval of OLY 1 with the changes outlined above. Motion carried as amended.

**8:39 PM** **MOTION:** Commissioner Cole moved to recommend approval of OLY 2: Transportation Chapter Updates, to the BoCC. Commissioner Lane seconded. Motion carried.

**8:40 PM** **MOTION:** Commissioner Lane moved to recommend approval of TUM 1: Parks and Recreation Plan Update, to the BoCC. Commissioner Myers seconded. Motion carried.

**8:41 PM** Commissioner Lane asked why staff recommends accepting Yelm’s Transportation Chapter update in light of concerns raised by the Commission. Public comments do not support the update. Ms. Swenson-Farrow replied that staff recommended approval because there were no policy changes and the text remains unchanged. Yelm is proposing to move the Transportation Chapter into its comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Kohlenberg indicated that the issues raised concern not only for Yelm but for Thurston County as well.

Chair Roper said even though Yelm is not proposing changes, the Commission is expected to look at the amendment and address issues based on guidance offered by the
Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board (WWGMHB) and court communications to date.

Commissioner Lane said he supports development as long as it’s responsible development. Traffic is a serious issue. To do nothing to restrict development, if possible, and not address transportation impacts is irresponsible.

**MOTION: Commissioner Lane moved to not recommend approval of Yelm 1: Transportation & Introduction Chapter Updates, to the BoCC. Commissioner Cole seconded. Motion carried.**

Chair Roper directed staff to include in the Commission’s letter to the BoCC that transportation and development impacts outside of Yelm’s UGA is included in staff recommendations for future development proposals that result in additional traffic impacts to Yelm’s existing transportation problems.

8:46 PM Mr. Kain explained the County’s SEPA process that includes traffic mitigation and forwarding information to local jurisdictions for review and comment. Jurisdictions are bounded by their respective comprehensive plans. If LOS F is adopted in comprehensive plans, there is no mitigation.

Chair Roper said the issue is Yelm’s comprehensive plan adopted LOS F in 1995 while the regional plan identifies LOS D as an acceptable standard. There appears to be no plans to move towards the target. The plan should meet concurrency or the plan should be changed.

7. **8:50 PM B: 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT - Grand Mound Water System Plan Update**  
   *(Staff: Scott Clark)*  
   Scott Clark distributed copies of a map and staff report. The Grand Mound Water System Plan (GMWSP) was due for a six-year update in 2005. He described the amendment process and agencies involved. The WWGMHB July 2005 decision delayed adoption of the updated water system plan until UGA sizing issues could be resolved. The Grand Mound UGA was not affected by the WWGMHB and BoCC subsequent rulings. As a result, the water system plan is ready for adoption.

For planning and coordination purposes, the state requires water purveyors to identify their current retail service area, as well as six- and twenty-year future service areas. The purveyor is not required to serve future service areas; however, if compelled by public health issues or growth, having future service areas identified allows for managed and coordinated expansion of a single public water system opposed to the proliferation and unmanaged growth of many small private or public systems.

Mr. Clark reviewed current six and twenty-year service area boundaries. Staff recommends adoption of the updated GMWSP as proposed.
8:58 PM Discussion ensued about a previous amendment considered by the Commission two years ago and maximum densities allowed depending on available utility services. Mr. Clark noted the County is not able to extend sewer service beyond its UGA. He pointed out the location of the Great Wolf Lodge on a display map. It’s beneficial for both the County and Confederated Tribe of the Chehalis Reservation to coordinate planning efforts. To date the relationship has been productive.

Conversation followed about funding resources to build infrastructure, providing developers with an incentive in advance to also hook up to sewer, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) as it relates to the Chehalis River, and using reclaimed water for mitigation purposes.


8. 9:17 PM B: GMA COMPLIANCE: URBAN GROWTH AREA – MARKET FACTOR
(Staff: Celinda Adair)
Celinda Adair distributed copies of a revised staff report. She reviewed background information regarding the July 2005 WWGMHB decision that Thurston County’s UGAs failed to comply with GMA due to their size. Draft plan amendments were attached to the staff report.

TRPC completed a buildable lands analysis. Counties are allowed to include a “reasonable land market supply factor” when sizing UGAs. Growth Management Hearings Boards have indicated that a range of up to 25% in excess capacity is considered a reasonable market factor for a UGA. However, language detailing local conditions justifying the market factor must be included in the County’s comprehensive plan. Staff expects that the proposed amendments will be refined following public comment. Revised language will be presented at the Commission’s work session following the public hearing.

Commissioners and staff discussed the 25% range and that counties can provide for a specific market factor based on local conditions. Commissioners commented on Yelm’s additional capacity of 35%, the potential for legal challenges, what’s included in excess capacity, and Lacey’s additional capacity.

Ms. Adair commented another option the BoCC is considering is combining Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater for a market factor of 24%.

Commissioners discussed the effects of shifting capacity and innovative techniques.

9. 9:32 PM ADJOURNMENT
With no further business, Chair Roper adjourned the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Joyce Roper, Chair

Prepared by Cheri Lindgren, Recording Secretary
Puget Sound Meeting Services