CALL TO ORDER

Chair Lane called the March 19, 2008 public hearing for Long-Term Agricultural Lands Designation Project to order at 6:42 p.m. Commissioners present provided self-introductions. The public hearing was held at Swede Hall, 18543 Albany Street SW, in Rochester.

Attendance: Chair Chris Lane and Commissioners Tom Cole, Liz Kohlenberg, Liz Myers, Scott Nelson, and Joyce Roper
Excused: Commissioner Kathleen O’Connor
Staff: Michael Kain, Michael Welter, Jeff Fancher, Celinda Adair, Aimee Swenson-Farrow, Sonja Cady, Sandy Norton, and Recording Secretary Cheri Lindgren

Chair Lane explained the public hearing procedures. Written comments will be accepted through the end of the public hearing.

Ms. Adair referred to maps of the proposal on display. The purpose of the public hearing is to accept public comment on the proposed amendments. She provided a project overview. The County’s agriculture designation criteria were challenged in July 2005 by Futurewise. The County revised criterion three. Criterion three previously involved parcels currently in agriculture use. The County adopted a change stating lands capable of use should also be considered to comply with the Western Washington Growth Management Hearing Board’s (WWGMHB) order. A compliance hearing was held by the WWGMHB in October 2007. The WWGMHB ruled Thurston County was still out of compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA) because revised criterion three was adopted but not applied. Based on all nine criteria, the County evaluated what lands meet those designation criteria. Staff is looking for more specific information on those parcels, such as critical areas and inadequate soil depth, etc. Following the public hearing, staff will conduct further analysis of all parcels taking individual comments and additional information into consideration. The Planning Commission will then refine the current proposal. Any written comments received following the conclusion of the public hearing will be held for the Board of County Commissioner’s (BoCC) public hearing process and will not be part of the Planning Commission’s work.

Chair Lane acknowledged that the issue is an emotional one for some people as well as a financial issue. He emphasized Commissioners are volunteer citizens and are not affiliated with the County.

Chair Lane opened the hearing for testimony.

Zachary Smith, 16525 103rd Avenue SE, #A, Yelm, said most of his comments about specific
properties are some that are marked in the Yelm area and very unsuitable for agriculture. He also has general comments about the criteria and what’s in the staff report. You have a large list in the staff report quoting the soil survey of Thurston County as published by DNR/Washington State University saying these are the soils that are prime agriculture, which is not what that book says. It says they can be. Page 121 of that book breaks down the grade into three different grades based on soil depths. When you have 40 or more inches of this soil type before a restrictive layer, it’s qualified as good. When you have between 20-40, they qualify as fair. When you have less than 20 inches of these soil types on top, they are qualified as poor. What’s written in the staff report is misleading. Basically, all of the properties marked in the Yelm area, which are on top of a hill, on a bluff, and are far above the river or any alluvial soil. He said he would submit a list at the end of his testimony. He has soil results for all of them. And, many of the parcels are under 20 inches of soil, and they’re poor by WSU’s and DNR’s definition. At best there are some that are fair. Not a single one in the Yelm area on the County’s list has good soils. He’s been at every property in Yelm that is marked and not a single one has agriculture potential. You can tell when you walk out there. He grew up on a farm in the Skookumchuck Valley. The pastures when not mowed were over your head. When you walk out to these properties the grass doesn’t even come up to your knees. The reason is the roots from the grass only go down so far before hitting the restrictive layer. The grass can’t get any taller than that. You have knee high grass, 20-inches of soil, poor, poor soil. Many of these properties in Yelm, by your own maps, are not even accessed by roads, which is another criteria. Another criteria is contiguous. You’ve got a ribbon of properties touching corner-to-corner right next to residential development, right next to current properties in the process of residential development. In fact, one of the properties on your map was just platted out a couple of days ago. He tried to pull up the parcel number today on the Geodata site and it’s 5s and 10s. You still have it marked as a 40-acre parcel and it’s smack in the middle of your properties, and that’s the (?) property. He couldn’t get the number but did indicate the location in relation to some of these other properties. Mr. Smith submitted written comments to staff.

Robert Parypa, 8505 Prather Road, Centralia, gave his three minutes to Zachary Smith.

Mr. Smith said he did not come here to criticize and say you’re doing stuff wrong. He also wanted to offer some creative suggestions and report about parcels that should be rezoned. A lot of these parcels on top of a bluff behind Yelm have been washed away. It’s all glacial till rock. There’s nothing but rocks. It barely grows trees. There are properties at the valley bottom, which tend to be suitable properties. You’ve excluded the McAlister Springs area, which is some of the remaining agricultural land in our area. He suggested the County look at the Skookumchuck and Deschutes Valley areas. His comments include over a dozen specific properties right now that are zoned RR1/5 and remain to be zoned RR1/5, one of which is a block of 374.5 one-acre parcels bounded by the Skookumchuck River, Skookumchuck Road, or Johnson Creek Road. Currently, it’s just open ground. They’re using it to harvest poultry. The County has not considered that. Further down Skookumchuck Road there are plenty of cattle farms on that road which you have left RR1/5. He’s wondering why fertile, river bottom valley property currently being used for farming is not on the slate and there is upland property that is nothing but rock and clay that is on the slate. There are a few other suggestions in the Yelm area. Unfortunately, they are not in blocks of 300 or more acres. In the Yelm area we have the
Yelm ditch that was made during the early settlement period and is the only irrigation system in western Washington. The Yelm ditch is still there. It was made by the settlers who picked the fertile and best farming ground and irrigated it. And, you are not using the land around the Yelm ditch as commercial agriculture, which has been its historic use. He suggested also looking at the land between the Yelm ditch and the Nisqually River because there are plenty of great alluvial soils in that location that people can farm on and people have farmed on for over 100 years. It boggles his mind that the County is leaving alone stuff that has a history of farming and trying to force people to farm on upland parcels with unsuitable soils. His comments include parcel numbers he’s referred to. The only one he doesn’t have a parcel number for is the (?) parcel that has been subdivided into 5s and 10s and is smack in the middle of what’s proposed for rezoning in Yelm. He suggested that the County update its information.

**Frank McCarthy, P.O. Box 2955, Olympia,** stated he has nine parcels of land totaling approximately 300 acres. Eight of the parcels are currently long-term ag. One parcel is zoned 1/5. He has made his contribution to the long-term ag with the other 270 acres. This parcel, the 1/5, he would consider it an economic disadvantage to convert that to long-term ag. He has long-term plans to give those properties to children in the family, use for retirement homes, and have value to supplement retirement income at some point in time. Putting 270 acres in long-term ag is his contribution and he wants his final piece left out. He strenuously objects to this. He doesn’t know how to file a formal protest, but that is what he would do.

**Kelly LeBaron, 367 Summers Road, Centralia,** said her property is 300 feet from the Lewis County line. She’s serviced by Lewis County PUD and her kids attended Lewis County schools. The only thing she does for Thurston County currently is pay taxes. Thurston County controls her property. She is bordered by two, five- and ten-acre parcels. The road will not go through to have access from Thurston County because there is a large ravine there. No one is going to pay the price to put a bridge over it. The soil is poor. There is a big ravine that limits the property either for building sites. She would prefer to stay out of the plan.

**Ken Miller, 11801 Tilley Road, Olympia,** said Kay Nelson gave up her three minutes to him. He provided copies of his testimony. He is past president of the state and local chapters of the Washington Farm Forestry Association, and current member of the Thurston County Ag Advisory Committee. He is also on the leadership team for Cascade Land Conservancy, trying to find ways to make transfer of development rights actually work to conserve more rural lands but on a more fair and voluntary basis than the mandatory taking before us today. Problem #1. No one in their right mind would presume that these onsite environmental benefits of agricultural land that are usually monoculture, crops, or uses, are higher than the worse forestlands. Ag lands are far better than developments but they don’t come close to forestlands from an environmental point of view. He urged the County to remove all current forestland from this list of potential down zones, or the County Commissioners remove these lands from the list for the obvious environmental reasons indicated. He doubts very much that those that brought the legal action against the County actually want forestlands converted to agriculture. Problem #2. Economic viability of both our ag and forestlands in Thurston County are shaky at best. Most people still keeping their land in ag or forestry is doing it mostly out of love of the land and the way of life they cherish. They have conserved this land against all odds. Converting this land is a last resort...
for anyone that got their hands dirty working their land. Rather than punish those remaining folks working the land, society should be rewarding them for their past and future conservation. Rural folks working the land make substantial financial investments in these lands in part based on the investment potential and care and existing rights on this land. Whether or not it is technically a taking, this proposed action is in fact a taking, the potential fruits of long-term investments right out of folks’ retirement, medical emergency, or their heirs’ educational fund. A year or so ago the County made an effort to resolve this issue with voluntary down zones. Few volunteered for obvious reasons. In that process there were several suggestions made that could help make it right for landowners. He doesn’t see any of those recommendations in this proposal. It’s unconscionable for a commission of folks representing the landowners in Thurston County to not make an effort to keep affected folks whole. Therefore, he urged the Commission to include in the recommendation any or all of the proposals previously offered to make it right for affected landowners. Problem #3. What happened to the TDR program? When GMA down zoned a lot of lands, yours was the first in the state TDR program to make it right for landowners. What happened to it? Not one single transfer has occurred because the County has not done their part. He would urge two things in this area. To include or recommend to the Board that all affected landowners be given at least 3-5 extra development rights for every unusable right taken away. This won’t cost the County a dime and it will show good faith that you at least care. Maybe they will actually be worth something sometime in the future. He further urged the Commission to recommend to the Board that they take the necessary steps to make a promise of their first in the state TDR program become something of real value to landowners unfairly bearing the brunt of this and past down zones that target rural folks to the benefit of urban folks. Finally, he thanked the Commission for its volunteer service to the community. This can’t be fun. It would be very simple and easy to conclude that you’re just simply powerless to avoid creating such hardship and economic loss to these rural folks providing such a wealth of free environmental benefits. However, please don’t take the easy way out by concluding you don’t have a choice because Futurewise made you do this. The courts are making me do this. The Commissioners are making me do this. Or, even the devil is making me do this. If it’s not in your power to make it right, at a minimum please be bold enough to show that you care about the landowners by recommending to the Commissioners that they keep the existing forestlands out of long-term ag if only because it’s nonsensible. Provide something of compensating value or potential value to affected landowners, and encourage them to start a process to fulfill their promise of a robust TDR program to help resolve this problem, and to accelerate voluntary conservation of other rural lands all without cost to the County.

Fremon Seay, Sr., 10503 Yelm Tera Street SE, Yelm, said he, his mother-in-law, and wife just bought 40 acres in the Bald Hills Road area, one of the areas you want to rezone. Not only will this cripple us because we just sold our houses to buy here, we need to be able to split at least five acres off to build a house. He has some other information here that has him totally puzzled. Out of all the perc holes dug on this land, he has had more people come in to dig more perc holes to try to find a place to put a septic system. He has failed. He could not get, one perc hole showed 20 inches of soil. That was the most he could get. The rest are between 12-18 inches. There is no soil. If you’re going to farm, you gotta have dirt, right? Well, how are you going to farm when there’s no dirt? Not only does it go from there, from there under it goes into something that’s called Glacier Silt. It’s 75 feet of it. There is no water penetration. It is
nothing but a swamp. It runs off both corner ends of his property. The entire solid wall, that triangle, they lose over five acres of their usable 40 to swamp. So he’s down to 35 acres now. If you guys do this to us, you’ll kill us. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about this. We have multiple families that have gone in together to purchase this land. If you do this to us, you’re putting all of us in the hole. We can’t not un-sell our houses and not un-pay for the tractor he needs to work out there and do what we need. He has done nothing but come across issue after issue about this land. There is nothing on this land except for 5-6” baby trees. But they don’t even grow because there isn’t no dirt. He suggested finding someplace that has dirt and grow food in it, and leave him alone. We’re trying to build a life for ourselves on his little piece of crap land. It isn’t no one else’s; it’s his. It may not be the best, but it’s his. He said he needs the right to be able to use it the way it’s zoned now so he can get ahead in life. If not, you’ve done him in. He submitted written comments.

Chris Lunde, 8133 River Drive SE, Tumwater, distributed handouts to the Commissioners. Displays related to the Port Blakely Tree Farm were provided. Mr. Lunde stated he works for Port Blakely Tree Farm, (PBTF) 8133 River Drive, Tumwater. PBTF has been a landowner in Thurston County since 1890. Over 1,100 acres of PBTF property are now under consideration. Simply put, Port Blakely’s parcels do not meet County criteria and they respectfully request they be removed from consideration. This is based on the goals of the GMA, soil type inaccuracies, soil steepness and soil types, and the inability of these parcels to provide lands for agriculture use of long-term commercial significance. Each of you has a booklet. You might remember my comments from earlier about 80 acres. He provided an overview of Port Blakely’s analysis and will discuss in detail one specific tract. Exhibit 1 is a topographic image that demonstrates the hilly and steep nature of the topography in sharp contrast to the Chehalis River Valley, much of which is in agriculture (blue and teal color on top of the map). Exhibit 2 is the basis of the case. It’s a chart of our soil and slope analysis. We compared slopes with the soils. Basically, what we found that slocum and (?) soils, the primary triggers for inclusion. We found that the slopes of these soils are steeper than those defined in the County criteria. In the end, that node on the right there, 7% of the 1,100 acres, will actually meet the County criteria. Tract F, exhibit 3 is a detailed cross-section analysis. Basically we took a whole section of land, cut it in half, north to south and west to east, and on the bottom what you’re seeing there is a profile of the land and what it actually looks like. It is quite steep and hilly. Finally, exhibit 4, this is a soil and slope, we basically looked at the soil data sources that cite this parcel contains Godfrey soils. The soil survey manual describes these soils as having 0-3% slopes and found in depressions in floodplains. Zero to 3% slopes are shown in yellow. You won’t see much of that. The off pink is slopes that are greater than 3%. Clearly this parcel is not in a floodplain. We basically conclude that the soil data is likely incorrect. Finally, there’s a memo in the package from Brian Thompson, a certified crop advisor with Thurston County Soil Conservation District. It details his conclusions with respect to growing ag crops on these lands. He found that the sites are generally not practical for commercial and crops due to topography and lack of water availability. He thanked the Commission for its service to the community. (Donna Weaver conceded her three minutes to Mr. Lunde.)

Fay Hanson, 12423 NE 131st Court E, #204, Kirkland, representing her mother Margaret W. Hanson, who owns approximately 40 acres at 4915 113th Avenue SW, Olympia. It was
originally an 80-acre parcel. When her father passed away the back 40 was given to her sister and herself. It abuts Gifford Road and is down the hill from Field of Dreams. It is not listed as agricultural. Her mother is in her late 90s and has planned on this property to be what she needs if she has to go to a nursing home. She is disabled. She has macular degeneration and is staying with her sister right now, but it doesn’t look very good because she’s failing fairly fast. She has owned this land for 68 years. Actually her father had it before they married, so it’s been in the family for over 70 years. She needs this now as a financial backup because she doesn’t have very much money. There are houses on both sides of the property that are not designated as agricultural land. This particular property that abuts 113th is also less than a quarter of a mile from Field of Dreams. She requested that this property be removed from consideration of agriculture lands for these reasons.

Tom Nolan, 8043 Columbia Way NE, Lacey, thanked the Planning Commission for taking time to listen to some of the concerns. His concern is directly related to what’s called Yelm Meadows off of Renda (?) Lane. The current zoning for Yelm Meadows is 1/5. One of the things that he wanted to bring to everyone’s attention, on the south side Renda Lane is the Gatares (?) property. This has been included as part of the 320 when in fact that 40-acre parcel has been subdivided. That will break up the 320 and bring it down to 280. We’re all trying to get to the highest and best use of these properties. What’s best for the County, what’s best for individuals, we’ll probably never reach 100% harmonious agreement. But, it is important to look at what has come before him as far as testimony. The soils out there are not going to be supportive of any type of agriculture concern, period. It’s just not going to happen. The property has been purchased by several buyers, some of which will hold on to it long-term, some of which will build their dream home on 40 acres, and some of which that are going to subdivide legally through the process set forth by Thurston County to create 5-acre parcels. The highest and best use out there for that property is its current zoning. Keep in mind that the designation is open. So if any one of you or any person that wishes to purchase a 40-acre parcel if they wish can go ahead and use that for agricultural purposes, be it 5 acres, 10 acres, 20 acres, or 40 acres. He thanked the Commission for their time. He does appreciate it.

Gary Wood, 22010 Grunenfelder, Centralia, concurred with Mr. Miller’s statements.

Ron Nelson, 3624 Waldrick Road, Olympia, thanked the Planning Commission for the tremendous job that they do as members. His property affected by this is 3624 Waldrick Road across the Deschutes River in Section 29, Township 17 North, Range 1 West. It is a 40-acre parcel. His family already has about 250 acres that’s donated to long-term ag use. Like the gentlemen before him said, they’ve probably done their share. This land is currently in the timber tax designation, and he’s not sure it’s appropriate to move it to long-term ag because it’s timber tax land. It’s been in the family since statehood. There’s no fear that any of his family will sell it in the near future so you don’t have to worry about it being developed. However, there is a fear, and you all know about the Port of Tacoma logistics center. Part of their property, not this specific parcel, but part of their property is “Plan B.” So the threat is not that they will sell it but that someone like the Port of Tacoma, or he knows of two other agencies - one has looked at it and one is talking about - taking part of their land. His biggest request is to not rezone this land and if the Port of Tacoma wants to take it, make them pay a high price for it to
preserve his grandchildren’s legacy. There are other ways to preserve farmland that he’d like to take the time to bring up. Purchase and transfer of development rights - you’ve already talked about that. Do allow the exchange at the maximum density or some density higher than what it’s currently zoned would really make a big difference. One of the things owners worry about in the farm area are nuisance ordinances. People can put them out of business just because their irrigation pump runs all night and keeps people awake. Setbacks from streams are big threats to agricultural land. If you put a 300-foot setback along the Deschutes River, some of those valleys are very narrow, and will take half the farmland from some people. And, he already mentioned condemnation. One of the other things that would be of great help, and this is a personal request, he’s been trying for eight years to get a permit to build a bridge across, not build but to repair a bridge across the river. He just doesn’t seem to have any luck doing that. Anything the Commission could do to help him with that process would help do more to preserve farmland than any of the ordinances that you might pass.

**Judy Schader, 19726 SE 128th Avenue, Yelm** stated people have already spoke about the wretched soils in Yelm that don’t support agricultural activities.

**Howard DeJarlais, 12841 Bald Hill Road SE, Yelm,** stated he owns a 20-acre parcel and from what he can gather from the criteria is the only reason he’s being considered is mainly because he lives next door to an 85-year old young man that owns 200 acres. One of the previous speakers mentioned the Yelm ditch. He’s got over 1,300 feet of it just south of his northern boundary. He would contend the deduct from the ditch alone would put him below 20 acres and take him out of consideration. You mentioned an importance of wildlife. The primary wildlife that creeps on his property is coyotes that steal his ducks and chickens, and he shoots them every chance he gets. He owns horses, mules, and cows that graze in the pasture, which is poor enough that from October until April he’s feeding them alfalfa. He said he’s 62 years old and he and his wife plan to retire sometime in the next five years. One of the primary reasons they bought the property was as an investment towards their retirement. A rezone of 1/20 will significantly impact that plan. One of the previous speakers mentioned the wonderful farmland soils in the Bald Hills. Well, he doesn’t feel that’s the case with his property. A wood lot to the south of his property isn’t even being considered, but the drainage from that wood lot significantly impacts his property. He owns a tractor and can show some pretty deep ditches the tractor makes in that soil just from going back and forth. He said he would greatly appreciate it if the County would remove his property from consideration. He submitted written comments.

**Jill Nelson, 3624 Waldrick Road, Olympia,** thanked the Planning Commission for volunteering and the hours they put in. She said she would like to talk about the property that is adjacent to the land her father spoke about earlier. They’ve been stewards of the land, taking care of and conserving the land since 1860. That’s 150 years that her family has wanted to make sure that this land stays the way it is and is protected, but you’re talking about taking part of that land and changing it to 1/20 and giving them nothing in return for that. There’s no economic benefit. There’s nothing you’re doing to make farming easier for them. They do this because it’s their family heritage, because they love the land, because it’s been a way of life for her family for more than a century, and yet they get slapped in the face and told you’re just going to take their land, change it to 1/20, and do nothing for us. As her father said, they want to continue to have
this land. They don’t want to sell this land, but every time they turn around someone is talking about taking their land, forcing them to do something with their land, or not allowing them to do something that would make their land useful such as rebuilding the bridge across the river. She doesn’t know why Thurston County wants to make it so difficult for people to farm land, but that’s exactly what they’re doing. They’re saying that they want to conserve agriculture land and help struggling farmers, and yet every chance they get, they’re trying to do something to them that makes them say, forget it, we give up, we’ll sell our land. They’ll subdivide into 5-acre parcels and they’ll get rid of it because it’s just too difficult. They don’t have the fight in them any more. You’re trying to punish us for all of the things they’ve done in order to conserve this land, in order for urban people to make decisions about what they should be doing with their land and for them to have more rights. It’s just not right. They’re trying to do exactly what you want them to do. So please if you’re going to do this, give them some sort of compensation. Make farming easier for people. Pull back some of the restrictions that you put on us so that they can keep this land and keep it the way they would like to, and have conservation in place. Because the way things are happening, we’re to conserve this land and they’re not going to be able to. My brother (tape change)… like to continue with the status quo, but are sick of going to public meetings and talking about things. Condemning land, taking land, it’s not right. It’s not fair. So, that’s what she has to say. Her father already spoke about the problems with the land and possible solutions that would make their lives easier. She said she hopes the Commission will take this back to the County Commissioners and talk about the struggles that people have as farmers in this area.

Paula Yantis, 4142 Skookumchuck Road SE, Tenino, said she lives on the road that has the cattle farm that should be considered ag, but the cow farms, if you look at the map, you’ll find that their lands are already in agriculture. What she’s here for this evening is she has her land, it’s a land grant, #41, that’s been in the family since 1854, and it’s stayed in the family and is what they hope what will happen in the future. They opted for agricultural land and set it aside a number of years ago, but the back half of the property, which you are considering now, is in forestry land, and it’s forestry. It has a big hill, a very steep hill and can’t be farmed. The rest of the property is wet, it won’t grow, it dries out in the summer, and it won’t even grow trees. She just had Cruiser, and there was only one type of tree, a red elm or something that would grow it according to the Cruiser. So, it definitely isn’t farmland. It’s kind of a catch basin for all the water that runs down the hills in that area. She asked the Commission to take a good solid look at it. She said she has an old map, an area photo, and it shows the land. The front part is under designated agriculture land. This is all farmland, here, up to the river. Back here it’s, you can obviously see, it isn’t farmland. It can’t be farmed and should be considered, shouldn’t be changed from forestry to designated farmland. For one reason, as it is now, she can sell building rights on 5-acre plots. In the front she has to have 20-acre plots. She has made several trips to the County office, and you should be aware you’ve counseled people of this, the affect you people have on us. My daughter came in one day to take care of some business. The attitude of the person helping her was, well, you shouldn’t have that much land. What do you need that for? And, there was another time that the same thing occurred. She gets the feeling that the County wants them to sell their land so future development can come in. They don’t want that. They want to keep this, as the Nelson’s, and she’ll vouch for the Nelson’s. She grew up out there and they are great farmers and very interested in their property the same way that they are. She
asked the Commission to consider looking at this part and not take it into the project. There’s about 205 acres of land grant land that they still have and in the back part are government lots. She thinks it’s the government lots they’re looking at. On this map that we received you can’t really tell. She would like the County to consider keeping it in forestry. It is forestland, and treat it as forestland.

Marlene Voss, Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Development Company, P.O. Box 9777-PH2, Federal Way, read a letter into the record. Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Development Company (WREDCO) is submitting comments in response to the proposed change of zoning on property Weyerhaeuser owns or has sold at Weyerhaeuser’s project Yelm Meadows. Weyerhaeuser feels that based on the following this property is not suitable for long-term ag. Item #1 talks about soils. This property contains Kapowain silt loam, Bald Hill very stony sandy loam, and McKenna gravely silt loam. The only type identified in your published information is #50 Kapowain silt loam. It would take a lot of manipulation (grading and leveling) to make this property pasture or agricultural land. Has the County allowed for this amount of manipulation in their studies? Also item #1 talks about wetlands and only specifically removes Class 1 wetlands. This property has significant areas of class 2 and 3 wetlands running throughout the property. Agricultural uses are not to impact any type of wetlands or wetland buffers. Therefore, based on existing rules, how is the property going to be converted and used for agricultural purposes. You would need to fill these areas in order to have the amount of acreage required. See the attached map with the letter. Item #3 talks about land use capability and tax status. This property is currently taxed at current use and is not in any special tax classification. Will this property automatically begin being taxed at agricultural tax rates? If not, then will the Council be ready to accept and re-classify any and all property into agricultural tax status at the property owners’ request? Item #6 talks about settlement patterns. It appears that the recent and proposed focus of adjacent land uses is an indication of settlement patterns that may have an effect on the long-term viability of agriculture. Within the Yelm Meadows development two lots are currently being subdivided into five parcels. These lots are in the center of the proposed LTA area. While these areas are generally at one home per five acres the presence and long-term protection of critical areas (wetlands, buffers, and oak stands) would allow for cluster development. The County notes that compatible land uses within and adjacent to LTA lands include forestry, mining, parks and preserves, and open space. However, the present indication is that the settlement patterns of recent and proposed development would not be compatible with LTA. Item #8 talks about agricultural diversity. While the County includes forestry as an agricultural use the presence of critical areas greatly limits the conversion of the present forestry use to other agricultural uses such as livestock pasture or crop production. The County would require that critical areas and buffers be left alone and not converted into active agricultural development and management. As such, the potential to obtain agricultural diversity is very limited and would not appear to meet the intent of the County’s program for the properties within Yelm Meadows. Weyerhaeuser asks that you keep this property as currently zoned.

David Thompson, 20625 Michigan Hill Road SW, Rochester, said you missed me this time when you downzoned, but you got me last time. He doesn’t have any particular complaints about what you’re doing other than he should support the people the County is affecting this time. It seems like there’s a big bad wolf up north in Seattle called Futurewise and this County
wants to buckle down every time they make any kinds of threats. He suggested that this County get a little backbone and stand up to them. The same thing happened in Lewis County and Futurewise backed down. If the County stood up and had some backbone maybe it wouldn’t have people coming up here and complaining as much and you affecting so many of their lives and financing by downzoning. It happens every few years. We’ve been told that the County has to do this because Futurewise has threatened us, so you downzone it. Then Futurewise comes back after they got what they want and asks for more, so you back down and downzone again. Then they’ll come back after this. This isn’t the last time. They’ll be back as many times as you back down to them. Until you stand up we’ll continue to go through this.

There was no further public testimony.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lane thanked everyone for attending. He said Commissioners heard what the residents had to say tonight. Members will have some long hard discussions about the issue. He stated the Commission wants to do what it can. The public hearing concluded at 7:40 p.m.

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Chris Lane, Chair

Prepared by Cheri Lindgren, Recording Secretary
Puget Sound Meeting Services