

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE’S ADVISORY GROUP ON LAND CONSERVATION**

**MEETING #1 SUMMARY**

Approved on September 29, 2016

**Date of Meeting: September 15, 2016**

<b>Advisory Group Members attending:</b>					
Lylianna Allala	✓	Jeremy James	x	Alanna Peterson	✓
Marc Berejka	x	Greg Johnson	x	Larry Phillips	✓
Michael Brown	x	Martha Kongsgaard	✓	De’Sean Quinn	✓
Leda Chahim (alternate)	x	Leann Krainick	✓	Nancy Skerritt	✓
Tom Dean	✓	Terry Lavender	✓	Vandana Slatter	✓
Tamara “TJ” DiCaprio	✓	Hank Margeson	✓	Steve Shestag	✓
Patti Dill	✓	James McNeal	✓	Mike Stevens	✓
Gene Duvernoy	✓	Louise Miller	x	Nate Veranth	✓
Melissa Garvey (alt.)	x	Michael Orbino	✓	Steve Whitney	✓
<b>King County Staff and support team members attending:</b>					
Christie True		Bob Burns		Michael Murphy	
Katy Terry		Ingrid Lundin		Karen Reed	

**Welcome and Introductions.** Advisory Group Co-Chair Larry Phillips convened the meeting at 5:05 PM and offered opening remarks, including welcoming members of the Advisory Group and Executive Dow Constantine. Co-Chair De’Sean Quinn joined in to conclude the opening remarks. Mr. Phillips introduced Karen Reed, an independent facilitator hired to help with the process. Ms. Reed introduced herself and led a round of introductions of everyone who was present.

**Welcome from King County Executive Dow Constantine.** Executive Constantine provided a welcome address. Mr. Constantine spoke of the impacts of population growth and development in this region, threats to farm and forest economies, and potential loss of habitat lands. He acknowledged past conservation accomplishments and asked the group to craft the vision for “finishing the job” of conserving high priority open space lands in King County in one generation. He noted that the current pace of funding and acquisitions won’t complete the job. The proposed conservation plan seeks to identify new sources of conservation funding; strengthen market-based approaches; exploring up-front private investment to leverage funds for early conservation purchases; and consider ways to accelerate the pace of acquisitions. Mr. Constantine recognized the need to collaborate across county and city governments on this conservation vision.

**Advisory Group Ground Rules.** Ms. Reed reviewed proposed ground rules which were then approved by the Advisory Group.

**Introduction of Executive’s Proposal for Land Conservation.** Michael Murphy, Transfer Development Rights Manager at the County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks, gave a PowerPoint presentation introducing the Executive’s land conservation proposal. Questions/comments that emerged from the presentation included:

- In addition to local sources, federal grants may offer funding opportunity, particularly with new efforts to respond to climate change.
- What is high value conservation land? This needs additional definition.
- Urban land conservation also can provide important contributions to equity & social justice, in addition to environmental benefits.
- How do we balance multiple interests (e.g. agricultural production versus ecological restoration along rivers)? (In response, staff noted that this effort seeks first to protect the land, recognizing that we are working in multiple ways to balance multiple goals in resource-based landscapes.)
- How can we ensure collaboration and integration of efforts between government and conservation-focused organizations to further this work?  
Should the Advisory Group review how we are deploying existing funds, or just new funding? (In response staff stated that the Advisory Group should provide feedback on both - assumptions on existing funding, as well as new revenue as well as potential partnerships.)

**Advisory Group Mission Statement.** Ms. Reed invited the group to read the Mission Statement.

Feedback included:

- Add text about integrating conservation work that is occurring at both King County and private and non-profit conservation groups.
- Specify that acceleration is to be considered as part of implementation strategies
- It is important to answer the question of whose vision this is, who benefits, and who is at the table to shape these answers.

*Karen will revise the mission statement and bring it back for approval by the Advisory Group at the next meeting.*

The group took a break at 6:30pm. Discussion resumed at 6:50 pm.

**Group Discussion on Initial Presentation / Homework on Presentation.** Ms. Reed mentioned the Homework in the packet, which *she will send out by email for Advisory Group Members to complete by Friday, September 23.* She asked the group members to offer their initial reactions and questions to Mr. Murphy's presentation. Comments included:

- There are many complex social systems, numerous government agencies, and many other overlays at work in our region – all of which will require us to be strategic about this work.
- There are creative financing approaches emerging out there that we need to track and pursue.
- There is a lot of wealth in this region; intrigued by the opportunities for philanthropy to play an important role in achieving the goal.
- Are we being ambitious enough?
- This process embraces complexity – the varied reasons why we might conserve land.
- Are health and equity issues ancillary benefits to land conservation, or are they drivers of priorities and decision-making?
- If we implement this strategy, is this all we are ever going to do to protect land? (is this literally “finishing the job” and then we’re done buying land?)
- How will this work draw from all members’ perspectives?
- We need to think about how this fits into all the other issues and decisions people face in their daily lives.

- We need to have narratives to draw people in to this conservation vision. Humanizing this effort is important to bring it home to people. We need to communicate in ways that are meaningful to people.
- Corporations need to hear how important it is to our residents that the outdoors be preserved
- We (as government, business, nonprofit) need to work on this because it's so important to why people live here.
- The presentation had a lot of information about cost; Advisory Group members also want to hear more about how we are defining "high conservation value", what lands are protected, what are the benefits of protecting those lands, what are the threats to those lands, and why it matters to people that these lands be protected.
- Filling the gaps in our existing public lands is very compelling.
- This work can't come fast enough, particularly with respect to protecting farmland held by aging farmers.
- Have other regions taken on a similar challenge? What are neighboring counties doing that might complement this work? Should we be thinking about how this affects all of Washington?
- It is good to present to the public a strategy that draws on philanthropy and market strategies in addition to taxation.
- We need to plan ahead if we are to responsibly manage growth and development while protecting our quality of life.
- Cities can help promote this vision within their communities, and development can help pay for it if we work with developers.
- Housing affordability and homelessness are important issues. What are the implications of not developing these 5500 parcels on overall buildable lands inventory and affordability?
- It's important to bring cities and businesses fully on board with this plan.
- We tend to focus on the 5% that Foundations give out as grants/philanthropy – we need to also focus on the 95% that those organizations invest and how we could engage those funds in helping solve this challenge.
- Regulations are pushing corporations to think about how their overall actions impact the environment.
- We need to flesh out more what the threats are to these lands that would indicate a need for additional funding. We should define these threats for each category.

**Overview of Advisory Group Work Plan and Charter.** Ms. Reed gave a brief overview of the Work Plan. She noted that the group may decide it wants to add additional meetings in order to accomplish all the work. She referenced the Charter: it will be discussed and approved at the next meeting.

**Closing Comments.** Ms. Reed noted that homework will be coming by email, as well doodle poll regarding date(s) for the last meeting in December. Members should also let staff know if they want King County email addresses set up for them. Mr. Phillips and Mr. Quinn expressed appreciation to the group for the good conversation and ideas expressed at this meeting.

Mr. Phillips adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.