

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S ADVISORY GROUP ON LAND CONSERVATION

MEETING #3 SUMMARY

Approved on October 20, 2016

Date of Meeting: October 6, 2016

Advisory Group Members attending:					
Jesús Aguirre	x	Jeremy James	x	Michael Orbino	x
Lylianna Allala	✓	Greg Johnson	x	Alanna Peterson	x
Marc Berejka	x	Martha Kongsgaard	x	Larry Phillips	✓
Michael Brown	x	Leann Krainick	✓	De'Sean Quinn	✓
Leda Chahim (alternate)	✓	Paul Kundtz	x	Steve Shestag	✓
Tom Dean	✓	Terry Lavender	x	Vandana Slatter	x
Tamara "TJ" DiCaprio	✓	Hank Margeson	✓	Mike Stevens	x
Patti Dill	✓	Mo McBroom (alternate)	x	Nate Veranth	x
Gene Duvernoy	x	James McNeal	✓	Steve Whitney	✓
Jon Hoekstra	✓	Louise Miller	✓	Christopher Williams (alt.)	✓
King County Staff and support team members attending:					
Christie True	✓	Bob Burns	✓	Michael Murphy	✓
Kevin Brown	✓	Ingrid Lundin	✓	Karen Reed	✓
Aaron Rubardt	✓	Doug Hodson	✓	Don Harig	✓

Welcome and Introductions. Advisory Group Co-Chair Larry Phillips convened the meeting at 4:36 PM. Mr. Phillips thanked the group for their participation. He said we are shifting from “what are we doing?” to “how do we get there?” He asked Advisory Group members to consider the “why” questions—why do we support the initiative? Why should the community support the initiative? What values are supported? The answers can help contribute to the vision section of the final report.

Christie True, Director of the King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks said that her staff are working to integrate, and respond to the conversations from the last few meetings. DNRP works to create green spaces for all people who live here, and it looks different in various parts of the county. While we have many opportunities to preserve green in the rural area, how do we meet the challenge to making sure the ribbons of green come into our urban area to support health and quality of life?

Advisory Group Business: Facilitator Karen Reed covered a few business items.

- **Roster:** We now have 27 members (Nancy Skerritt has resigned due to work conflicts).
- **Charter:** Final changes were approved last week. (Note that membership numbers continue to change slightly, but we will leave the Charter as is.)
- **Mission Statement:** In packets incorporating final changes approved last week.
- **Meeting Schedule:** Updated version in packets; 12/14 location TBD.

Meeting 2 Summary. Members present voted unanimously to approve Meeting #2 Summary.

General Discussion Items.

Ms. Reed posed a few questions to the group will need to answer as part of the mission:

- Do you support the scope that the executive proposed or should we be looking at different types of land?
- Do urban acquisitions fit within the existing five categories or should they be set up as a 6th category?
- Whatever scope you endorse, how do we pay for it?
- How do we protect the Parks Levy no matter what we do?

In response, it was noted that Regional Trails have key benefits to cities for mobility and open space opportunities, but we haven't been discussing them in that context much so far.

Ms. Reed highlighted several themes she heard from last week's meeting:

- Generally, Advisory Group members seemed to concur that there is a compelling case that there are public health benefits to be secured from acquiring urban green spaces, but these are very expensive and probably hard to find.
- Land acquisitions offer a suite of benefits of varying strength, depending on the parcel. Programming on a parcel could increase the benefits provided.
- Conservation in urban areas may need to balance the benefits to urban/underserved populations with considerations of whether/how this impacts housing affordability.

Bob Burns, Deputy Director of DNRP, noted that they are considering a phrase like "nature-based recreation" instead of "passive recreation" – please provide feedback.

Benefits/Values Handout. Mr. Burns reviewed a one-page matrix that staff prepared to describe benefits for the categories of land. Responses of the group included:

- This approach does resonate
- Should "people" benefits be portrayed more widely? Broader than shown here.
- Other values consider: food security; water supply; public safety (e.g. related to flood attenuation, disaster preparedness); climate resiliency; quality of life
- Should urban lands be called out separately from rural?
- Can equity and human health be called out more broadly? Indicated visibly as a foundation to all of this?
- We should likely include a 6th category of land: urban open space. There was general agreement on this point.
- How do we measure what value each of these lands brings – what are the numbers behind the dots?
- How do we protect quality of life, and also provide infrastructure and development that complements and co-exists with that, keeps us competitive and attractive to regional corporations for being green?
- Can this values discussion help cities develop the criteria they might use to identify their priorities?

Presentation – Cost Model: Assumptions & Methods. Ingrid Lundin, DNRP staff, presented. Questions/comments during this presentation included:

- Urban land opportunities may be limited; might be less expensive to restore natural lands in urban areas rather than buy new lands. Should that be considered as part of this work?
- Are we considering whether owners of the targeted parcels are willing to sell?
- How to address future changes in policy, science, public land surplus, etc. over time – contingency funding or some other approach?
- Are there studies of how climate change might impact our area that would suggest land priorities to protect in order to mitigate effects of climate change? Staff acknowledged that priorities may change through time.
- Some parcels may be protected not by buying entire parcel, but by protecting the portion (in fee or easement) with highest habitat contribution.
- What is current split of fee vs easement holdings by the County? About 5:1.
- Where would additional Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding come from? How would capital projects be achieved that are not funded through “basic” O&M under this measure? Could be from Parks Levy, grants, other funding measures; could vary O&M standard; could there be philanthropic opportunities.
- How were Current Use Taxation (CUT) retention thresholds determined, do they mirror existing experience? They do not reflect history: there have been low exit rates from CUT—3% in total since the 1980s. Thresholds used are discussion points, not based on study.
- What were cost numbers based on for earlier meeting (if we can vary fee vs. easement; O&M; CUT)? The earlier numbers presented a *range of variables* resulting in a total cost range of \$1.5 – 1.8 billion.
- Could CUT benefits be extended or improved to increase program retention?
- The state legislature would need to approve any changes to the CUT program.
- Is eminent domain a part of this proposal? No. King County’s practice is to pursue voluntary work with landowners.
- How many parcels are in CUT Countywide?
- What is the *net acreage* over time in CUT – not just the amount exiting?
- What happens to parcels that come out of CUT? Are they developed? More research is needed.
- How do we adjust the level of CUT enrollment in this model, in the context of achieving permanent protection?
- Should we assess which CUT lands are highly valuable and which are more threatened, to make a more selective approach to which to retain in CUT or to acquire?
- We may see ‘neighborhood effects’ over time – as we acquire land, the values increase for the neighboring land. This could affect initiative costs, but it is not possible to calculate now.

The group took a break from 6:10 to 6:24.

Presentation – Revenue: Assumptions & Methods. Michael Murphy, DNRP staff, presented. He noted that his presentation covers funds available to King County – there are more funds

out there that are available to *cities*, which could add to the overall picture. Also, the dollars are presented here assuming no changes in current policy direction about how existing funding sources are used.

Questions/comments included:

- Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) revenues presented are only those CFT revenues that are awarded to King County, not representing the shares awarded to cities. Question arose as to whether the CFT revenue awarded to King County would be used for acquisition of a property in the urban unincorporated area. Yes – King County’s share of CFT revenue is used for acquisitions in all unincorporated areas of King County – both urban and rural.
- Similarly, are REET 1 (Real Estate Excise Tax -1) revenues identified only those generated from unincorporated area transactions? Yes.
- How close are we to our CFT bonding capacity? This is a county policy limit. There is some capacity now, but will be more as bonds are retired over time.
- Can CFT bond debt be refinanced? Yes, and typically is whenever there is opportunity.
- Are TDRs coming from rural areas and entering urban areas? Yes. These are permanent protections on land. Cities can do their own in-city TDR programs.
- Does CUT result in a loss in overall tax revenue? No, it is a shift – the same revenue is collected within each taxing district so the burden is shifted to other properties in the district. The per parcel burden is minimal.
- Could incentives to retain properties in CUT be increased, or could penalties to withdraw from the program be increased? Likely properties withdraw from CUT because the financial benefits of a development opportunity outcompete the tax savings from keeping a property in CUT.
- There is significant potential for revenue generation from carbon markets driven by corporate need. These markets need state legislation to develop. Only California has a mandatory market, otherwise it’s voluntary. Bullitt Foundation may be working to help expand national carbon market opportunities that could help protect smaller parcels.
- “Ecosystem services” is not used as a term much now. “Payment for Ecosystem Services” is used more often.
- Have we compared recent bonds that cities passed (rates, scale, success)? Not yet. More research is needed.

Homework. Please consider what items we want public feedback on during a survey. No need to craft the questions, but consider the topics/elements that would be helpful.

Final Comment:

- Can we talk explicitly about social equity? How do we employ a social equity lens throughout our work to do the most work for everyone’s benefit?

Mr. Phillips adjourned the meeting at 6:58 pm.