

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
March 9, 2005
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola, Dennis Dart, Lee Witter Kahn, Jim Franzel, Doug McClelland, Ole Una, Leonard Guss

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Doug Schindler, Julie Stangell

Exofficio member present: Amy Grotta; Randy Sandin

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Kristi McClelland, Linda Vane, Bill Loeber

Guests: Fred Sayer, Vashon Forest Stewards; Mark Sollitto, King County Transfer of Development Rights Program; Boyd Norton, Washington DNR; Julie Larson and Martin Dicker, Office of Business Relations & Economic Development; Jeanette McKague, Council staff; and Jan Hunt, Hollywood Hills Stewardship Alliance.

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Action Items:

1. Alex Kamola will write a letter to Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels in support of the King County Transfer of Development Rights Program.
2. Doug McClelland will incorporate the changes recommended by the commission into the letter to Ron Sims regarding the WLRD Business Plan.
3. Randy Sandin will meet with Julie Stangell, Kristi McClelland and other members of the CAO Implementation work group.
4. Ole Una, Alex Kamola, Dennis Dart and Doug McClelland will serve on a work group to discuss forest certification of King County lands and to research the services offered by the Northwest Certified Forestry Group before the May RFC meeting.

Motions:

Motion 1-0305 "To send a letter in support of the King County Transfer of Development Rights Program to the Seattle Mayor." The motion was passed unanimously.

Motion 2-0305 "To adopt the January 12, 2005 minutes as written." The motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Report

Alex commended the writer on the quality of the minutes from the January meeting.

Staff Reports

Linda Vane

Financial Disclosure Forms. Linda distributed copies of the annual Statement of Financial and Other Interests. Completed forms may be returned to Linda at the end of the meeting or mailed in by April 1st. Linda also distributed copies of the informational brochure "Code of Ethics: For Members of King County Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Other Multi-Member Bodies."

Kathy Creahan

Fire Interface Best Management Practices Task Force. Jim Rankin, King County Fire Marshall, would like to have a member of the RFC serve on this task force. With the development of King County's new Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) there were concerns that people would not be able to protect their property from fire and comply with the CAO. The purpose of the task force is to determine what, if any, provisions in the CAO could hinder implementation of these practices. There is already a lot of information on fire safe practices on which the task force can build their recommendations. For the information of the commissioners, Kathy passed around examples of documents concerning fire safe practices. These are available on the Internet [Josephine County, Oregon Integrated Fire Plan - http://cwch.uoregon.edu/CCWP/JCIFP/Fire%20Plan/fire_plan.htm; FireWise - http://www.firewise.org/fw_index.htm; SAF Community Fire Planning - <http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/cwpp.cfm>; and Tolt Triangle Fire Council- <http://www.toltfirewise.org/>].

Alex suggested that Jim Rankin come to the RFC and get input rather than having a commissioner dedicate a lot of time to committee meetings. Kathy responded that Jim Rankin will come to a future meeting of the RFC and if anyone is interested in the task force, they may volunteer.

NW Natural Resources Group – Forest Certification Services. A few years ago the Forestry Program held a forum on forest certification approaches. We do not intend to revisit that here, but the Forestry staff did meet recently with Ian Hanna of the Northwest Natural Resources Group (NNRG) to learn more about a new service called Northwest Certified Forestry. Kathy distributed a sample of the brochure describing their services for the information of the RFC. The NNRG is a new approach that employs group certification under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which is much less expensive process for landowners. Part of this new approach is marketing. For example, they try to bring in mills and other missing links, so it is not just a matter of certification in order to build the market for certified wood. They want to offer marketing assistance to their members and want to have the ability to identify wood as coming from the Northwest.

In addition, King County is looking into the possibility of certifying forest lands owned by the County. Ron Sims's Office asked the Department of Natural Resource and Parks to look into the matter and the Department will decide whether the matter is worth pursuing. The conversation with County management is still in the early stages.

In doing initial research on the subject, the King County's Forestry Team talked to the NNRG about their group certification program and about certification in general. The Forestry Program staff plan to invite the NNRG to make a presentation to the RFC at a future meeting. Alex commented that this will be a heavy discussion and recommended that plenty of time be made available on the agenda. Doug McClelland added that there is a pretty aggressive push for certification in Washington Department of Natural Resources. He concurred that the RFC will have a lot to say on the subject and that if there are staff with King County that are interested in forest certification they should seek input from the RFC. He added that the County should consider costs and benefits of certification in making a decision. Dennis Dart pointed out that there are a number of certification systems and avenues that should be looked at. For example, there is discussion of allowing those that follow the Fish and Forests Rule to be certified. Additionally, Dennis works for a Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)-certified company and there are definite costs beyond the fees you pay in terms of time and materials in order to conform to the certification process. Len recommended that those evaluating programs look for evidence that a certification process has yielded premiums for timber sellers at the retail level.

Kathy said that this question is simply one that came to the Forestry Program staff as the "experts" to make a recommendation. She will include the RFC's input. This is not a pressing matter and can be discussed at a later meeting. Alex suggested that a special meeting be held to put together some recommendations from the RFC. Ole, Alex, Dennis and Doug McClelland offered to serve on a work group to further discuss forest certification.

Transfer of Development Rights Update

Mark Sollitto, Manager, King County Transfer of Development Rights Program

Rural forest landowners who enter the program sell the development rights on their property, which is designated as a "sending site." A conservation easement is recorded against the rural property that protects it from development. A corresponding "receiving site" is identified inside an incorporated urban area. This is a voluntary program that allows more dense development in urban areas in exchange for protecting open space in rural areas. Interlocal Agreements among King County and cities are a key element of this program. In 2000, King County adopted an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Seattle that provided for the transfer of development rights from the rural area into the Denny Triangle, just north of downtown proper. Under this agreement developers in the receiving site can obtain a 30% increase in building height. The agreement coincided with the economic downturn in Seattle, however. This temporarily slowed down the process of assigning rights in the Denny Triangle.

Since the beginning of the program, King County has transferred more acres in development rights than any other county, but one in the U.S. We have a total of \$31 million in the transfer of develop rights certificates. In a new initiative, King County is offering up to \$200,000 in grants to cities that will enter into an Interlocal Agreement to accept the transfer of development rights from the rural area into cities.

At issue is the County's agreement with the City of Seattle regarding the Denny Triangle. Under that agreement, one rural development right can be converted into 2,000 square feet of residential development within up to 30% additional building height in an area where 300 feet is the limit on building height. Seattle is proposing to change their requirements and allow greater height and density if developers put money in a low-income housing fund. According to Mark, the County's position is that to increase the availability of low-income housing is a very good thing. However, as currently proposed these changes would eliminate the Denny Triangle as a receiving site for rural development rights. The County would like to see the transfer of development rights retained as an option.

Doug said that the RFC endorsed the Transfer of Development Rights Program some years ago as one of the incentives in the Forest Plan that would help preserve the value of forestlands. Dennis said that the citizens of Seattle benefit greatly from this program and the rural landscape. He added that this program is one way to keep the rural landscape working the way it is. Len said that it sounds like a clever way to get private developers to pay for preserving forest land for the community; the County simply acts as an interim banker. Lee said that she tried to have her land be a sending site in 1997. In her experience the supply has always exceeded the demand. If the demand represented by the Denny Triangle is eliminated, she does not see how the transfer of development rights program will survive.

Dennis motioned that the RFC send a letter to the City of Seattle in support of retaining the Transfer of Development Rights as an option. Alex seconded the motion. The commission adopted the motion by unanimous agreement. Alex will write the letter as Chair of the RFC.

Work Group Reports

CAO Implementation. Kristi McClelland reported for Julie Stangell. The purpose of the work group is to look at how the CAO is working in terms of providing flexibility to forest landowners and forestry operations. The group has reviewed the CAO web site as requested by Randy Sandin at the last meeting and has decided to meet with Randy on sites affected by the CAO before the next RFC meeting. Kristi distributed the text of the King County DDES web pages regarding Forest Practice Development Moratoriums and Forest Management Plans.

King County Water and Land Resources Division Business Plan. Doug McClelland distributed a draft letter on behalf of the RFC to be sent by the Chair to the King County Executive. The letter summarizes the commissioners' comments on the business plan at the January meeting. Discussion of the letter was tabled until the end of the meeting.

Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee (RAC)

Jim Franzel, USDA Forest Service

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (PL106-393) in 2000. The law dedicates 25% of the receipts from timber harvests and other activities to counties. Because timber revenues have declined in recent years, Congress came up with a base amount that looks at receipts in the 1990s and uses that to calculate payments to counties. This legislation is up for reauthorization next year and there are signs that the question of whether the program should be continued or not will be controversial in Congress. Under Title II of this law, grants are made available for projects that benefit National Forests. There is about \$100,000 available in Snohomish and King counties. In March the Forest Service is asking for proposals to be evaluated by the Resource Advisory Council team. Projects must benefit the National Forest directly or indirectly. One half of the funds must be spent on roads and watershed restoration.

Len asked about past proposals. Jim said that they have mainly been watershed habitat restoration and road obliteration projects. The Forest Service has also had interpretation projects like the Snoqualmie Valley Historic Society, projects such as Wade Holden's clean up projects in the I-90 corridor near North Bend and a number of Forest Service planning projects. Jim said that projects can be on land adjacent to the National Forest if they benefit the National Forest. Jim distributed a copy of the press release announcing "Project Proposals Needed for \$800,000 in Forest Improvements."

King County Rural Economic Development Strategy

Julia Larson, Rural Economic Strategy Coordinator

King County Office of Business Relations & Economic Development

Julia introduced her colleague, Martin Dicker, who is also with the Office of Business Relations & Economic Development. The Council and the County Executive are committed to the successful development of a strategy by the end of the year to support and sustain the economic viability of the rural community. Julia anticipates that the plan will include a limited number of "all encompassing" or county-wide strategic goals, policies, and proposed activities or actions. Her team will produce an "Initial Rural Economic Report" for King County and in the process will hold meetings with key stakeholders to solicit input into the process, the strategy, and identification of potential opportunities.

Julia asked the RFC to assist her by providing input on the process and strategies and advising on key stakeholders such as businesses and/or forestry professionals, nonprofits and governmental departments. She seeks to identify both opportunities and barriers related to the long term viability of productive forest lands. "Viability" may require actions such as maintaining existing forest lands, reclaiming lands as appropriate into forest production, correcting misconceptions

about forestry, and/or continuing public education on forestry and the benefits of forest lands. Specific questions from her team include:

- How can King County assist in the development of cooperatives for smaller forest landowners?
- What “services” would land owners need?
- Can the County assist with “specialty products” marketing by helping to identify or create markets or by educating foresters as to opportunities?

Julie said that in this early phase of the project, she would like to know from the RFC who may already be engaged in projects that could serve as demonstration projects. Martin said that this plan will not sit on the shelf. The team is looking for projects to implement and opportunities to partner on forestry projects.

Kristi McClelland introduced Fred Sayer, who is involved in the Forest Stewards project on Vashon. Kristi described the Vashon project as an excellent model of sustainable forestry and a rural community initiative. She also described the Tolt River Highlands group as an example of a group of small forest landowners who are developing a cooperative approach to harvesting in order to ensure forest health. The Tolt River group has received assistance from WSU Cooperative Extension’s Forest Stewardship Program.

Alex said that, especially after King County’s Critical Areas Ordinance, there will be more and more small properties that need management and are not well maintained. We need a pool of contractors who can provide a multitude of maintenance services to small landowners, such as removing blackberry and ivy. Likewise for harvesting. If a cooperative permit were available for group of ten or so landowners to do a commercial thinning, a single operator could go from parcel to parcel. It would be much easier to do than having each landowner getting a separate permit. Fred Sayer of the Forest Stewards explained that his group did this on Vashon in Agren Park. As contractors for the Parks Department, they did a prescription for an ecological thinning on what was primarily a Douglas fir monoculture. They hired Timber Tech to do a low impact, variable density thinning and pulled 200,000 board feet of Douglas fir and 50,000 board feet of marketable alder. The best of the fir was bought by the Forest Stewards and the rest was sold off the island.

According to Fred, the King County Parks Division used their profits from the sale to hire EarthCorps to remove invasive weeds, build trails, etc. Now there are neighborhoods on the island that want to pool to do similar thinnings. The Vashon Forest Stewards are now finding that there are a number of neighbors on the island who are interested in pooling to do the same sort of thinning across several properties. A five-acre landowner can do such a project.

Alex asked if there is a local operator on Vashon as in the rest of the County it is difficult to find operators who are willing to work on small parcels. Fred said that they hired an off-island operator. The profit was not large. They are forced to sell to mills off the island. If the wood is

good quality they mill it themselves. They have a portable band saw. They need a kiln, however. Fred said that they sold about a third of the Agren Park wood and some from private land. About 6,000 board feet went to a kiln in Tacoma. They have sold mostly to people on the island. Len commented that the lumber they have sold is enough for two houses. Fred said it is mostly trim, not structural wood. It is very high quality.

Amy added that among many small landowners the barrier to harvesting is not having the confidence to hire a contractor. People do not know where to look or how to hire.

Len commented that it takes \$30-35,000 to buy a truck-mounted portable mill. An entrepreneur could bring the mill to the logs and do 40-50 logs at a time. Doug McClelland said that the Vashon Island group is leading the way. It is an idea that could be taken to the north and south parts of the county. He recommended that the county should: (1) get the information about how to harvest and be successful on the web and (2) get the permit process simplified. Dennis commented that the large forest landowners drive the market that makes small forestlands economically viable. The economic strategy should look at the importance of preserving large forest tracts because the large landowners are more likely to manage for a long planning horizon and a diverse age structure in the forest.

Public Hearing: Proposed Amendments to the Public Rule Concerning King County Forest Stewardship Plans - Kathy Creahan, King County Forestry Program

The public hearing was opened at 11:30 a.m. Kathy provided an introduction to the Public Rule. The existing rules for Forest Stewardship Plans have been in place since 2002. Some County programs such as the current use taxation programs, transfer of development rights and certain permits, require that a Forest Stewardship Plan be filed by the landowner. King County's new Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) identifies several additional instances where a stewardship plan is required. The purpose of the revisions to the Public Rule concerning Forest Stewardship Plans is to add those references to the public rule and to add a little more specificity regarding those new instances than is contained in the CAO. Kathy distributed a copy of the Public Rule and reviewed the proposed changes. According to Kathy there is very little substantive difference between the existing and the proposed Public Rules.

No one from the public signed up from testify, so the hearing was closed at 11:40 a.m. The floor was opened for discussion by the RFC. In connection with Section 3.4 of the proposed rule (owners of property in long-term forestry who want to avoid the development moratorium on a portion of the site), Dennis posed this question: If a landowner owned 20 acres and so is going through a state permitting process, to avoid the moratorium do they go through a straight Class 4-G non-conversion or are they just going for a straight Washington DNR Class 3 permit; and if so, how long does it take for the County to lift the moratorium once the process to lift the moratorium is started and what part of the property does that apply to? Randy Sandin replied that one can harvest under a State-issued permit with a County-approved Forest Stewardship Plan

that identifies the excluded area. The plan should include a map that identifies the area to be harvested.

Len asked how much it would cost to prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan under as per Section 6.0 of the Rule. Kathy answered that most landowners prepare the plans themselves. King County and WSU Extension offer a class for \$100 that landowners can take and that technical assistance is available from King County foresters. Alex said that if landowners hire someone it typically costs in the range of \$500 to \$1,000. Randy added that maps and aerial photos are available from the County for free. Doug M. asked if there are standards for maps as there is concern that the cost of providing detailed maps would be prohibitive. Randy said that DDES does not need that much detail, especially if one is not putting in permanent structures. What one can normally produce with GIS is adequate. If one is putting in a logging road under a forest practice permit DDES requires more detail because there is a good chance that road will become permanent. Kathy added that the Public Rule concerning Forest Stewardship Plans does not cover permanent logging roads. She continued that one could put a planned road in the stewardship plan, but that plan would not be the basis of a permit. An extended discussion regarding mapping ensued. Dennis recommended that the County not require maps that were more detailed than those provided by the County at no cost, for example those on the County's IMap web site [http://www.metrokc.gov/gis/mapportal/iMAP_main.htm]. Julie said that the information required in Section 6.4.2. of the proposed Rule for site plans, *i.e.*, "forest stands, easements, critical areas, and existing or planned non-forest features" should ensure an adequate level of detail in any maps. Kathy concluded by saying that the County's intention is to make the proposed Public Rule easy for landowners to comply with.

WLRD Business Plan Discussion

The RFC resumed the discussion of the draft of the letter to the Executive and the Council. The commissioners recommended that the letter include a statement to the effect that surface water management fees are an appropriate and cost effective source of funding for the direct support to forest landowners that the Forestry Program provides. A second point to be added to the letter is that the Forestry Program should coordinate efforts with County Agriculture Commission. Amy pointed out that as the County Executive has appointed Julia Larsen to do the economic development strategy, the letter should say that technical assistance to landowners fosters economic development. Doug M. recalled that at the last meeting Daryl Grigsby talked about reducing management layers in the Water and Land Resources Division. Doug expressed the concern that in merging programs there may be a danger of de-emphasizing Forestry and Agriculture to the point that they are no longer the stand alone entities originally envisioned by the County Council. Doug M. will make these and other changes recommended in the course of the discussion.

Minutes

There was some discussion of the format and content of meeting minutes. It was decided that in the future the first page of the minutes will include a list of action items agreed to or decisions made at the meeting and that the staff will seek to include enough detail in body of the minutes to

be useful to those who missed the meeting and/or need more information about the content.

[Minutes from past meetings available on the Forestry web page at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/forestry.>]

The minutes were approved as written by unanimous agreement.

Suggestions for future agendas

- Input to Jim Rankin on Fire Interface Best Management Practices
- Forest Certification of King County lands
- Understanding CAO implementation (with the RFC's CAO Implementation Work Group)
- Rural Stewardship Plans – E.g., what are they, how are they different than Forest Stewardship and Farm Plans, how do the plans relate to timber harvest and permits?
- Presentation on Washington Native Plant Society programs
- Boyd Norton, Washington DNR
- Jim Franzel on forest management in National Forests

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is May 11, 2005, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Preston.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

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