

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
September 19, 2001
Mercerview Community Center

Commissioners present: Jean Bouffard, Rudy Edwards, Louis Kahn, Steve Ketz, Ken Konigsmark, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Dave Warren

Commissioners absent: Gordon Bradley, Bill Kombol , Andrew Schwarz

Exofficio members: Connie Blumen

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Bill Loeber, Kristi McClelland, Benj Wadsworth

Guests: Lee Kahn, Theresa Koppang, Charlie Raines, Julie Stangel

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

Minutes Approval

- Motion 1-901: “To adopt the July meeting minutes as written.” Motion moved, seconded and approved.

Chair Report

Doug suggested that the Commission should have a social gathering at some point this fall. He distributed copies of Executive Sims’ response to the Commission’s letter about the County reorganization and land management. He feels that the Commission’s voice is being heard.

Ken mentioned that he spoke before Council on behalf of the Commission in favor of making the TDC program permanent. The program was passed with Councilmember Pullen casting the only dissenting vote. The Council did propose that the program allow urban separators and FPD land to be sending sites.

Staff Report

Benj announced that the flights are still scheduled for September 25 and 27, though they may be complicated by the fact that small planes are still grounded due to the terrorist attacks on September 11. There is a fairly full guest list.

Kathy and Benj gave a presentation to the Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee of Council as part of the confirmation hearing for Louis Kahn and Dave Warren. Ken also attended and spoke on behalf of the Commission. Benj presented the FON slideshow, and Kathy summarized the activities of the forestry program. Ken commented that the meeting went very well and suggested that it be shown at the next Commission meeting. Benj commented that staff is ready to give the slideshow to outside audiences, and if anyone has ideas, they should pass them on to Benj. Jean Bouffard suggested contacting the Municipal League.

Benj commented that the forest policy has been sent up the chain on route to the Executive's office. He thanked the Commission for their input in its development.

The Friends of Rock Creek have received a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service office of Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance to develop a strategic implementation plan for the Rock Creek Vision. Benj does not yet know the details of the grant, but he feels that it will be a big help to FRCV.

Bill Loeber gave an update about an effort on Vashon to develop a forestry cooperative. There will be a workshop on November 3 on Vashon to kick off the effort. The group has invited Jim Birkenheimer from Wisconsin to come out for a week and consult. His website is www.timbergreen.com. Dave Warren elaborated on the effort. He feels that a coop could assist landowners in stewarding their land. The group is currently deliberating whether they would be a non-profit or a for-profit organization.

Benj distributed a brochure on the Green River watershed salmon restoration effort. He also stated that a number of staff from the WRIA planning effort have recently talked to staff in the forestry program about the need to incorporate forest retention efforts into their Early Action Plans.

Benj mentioned an article that Bill Kombol sent him about Plum Creek's recent purchase of the timberland division of Georgia Pacific, which will make them the second largest timberland owner in the US after International Paper. The article also discussed Plum Creek's intention to diversify into real estate and possibly profit by working with local governments to sell development credits.

BPA Issue

Doug introduced Charlie Raines from the Sierra Club who was asked to come to the meeting and discuss BPA's proposal to construct a new powerline through the Cedar River and Raging River watersheds. Doug commented that BPA powerlines are one of the major causes of deforestation in the County. Benj reminded the Commission that they had addressed the issue of BPA mitigating their impact over a year ago in their discussion of potential forest conservation strategies.

Charlie summarized BPA's proposal, which involves building a 9-mile powerline from Kangley to Echo Lake, paralleling an existing line. He feels that the DEIS is not thorough and does not address the impact of the project on forest. He feels that a better alternative would be for BPA to rebuild the existing towers to accommodate an additional circuit. If the proposed alternative is truly necessary, he feels that BPA should mitigate the impact by acquiring and conserving forestland elsewhere. The City of Seattle and Executive Sims have submitted comments to BPA. Ken commented that he has been involved in the process for some time, and he agrees that BPA should have to mitigate. He feels that BPA has not been very responsive to those concerned with the impact of forestland. Doug suggested that BPA should also be required to manage the vegetation in their powerline right-of-ways to provide better habitat for wildlife and improve the ecological condition of the watersheds through which they pass. Fred commented that there is a need for redundancy in the power system, and he has concerns that parallel lines next to each other do not provide enough redundancy.

Motion 2-901: "To submit a letter supporting the comments of the Executive." Moved, seconded and approved.

Forest Certification marketing effort

Theresa Koppang gave a summary of the Built Green program, which provides a rating system for residential buildings based on their use of environmentally responsible materials. She also discussed the US Green Building Council, a national program of which King County is a member. They have developed the LEAD program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Development), another system by which commercial buildings can earn points for using green materials. Both Built Green and The Green Building Council advocate the use of FSC certified wood.

Theresa is trying to figure out how to market the green building concept to the consumer. She feels that the average consumer has a hard time understanding the broad concept of green building, but many are interested in certified wood. She is trying to get Home Depot to partner with KC in promoting FSC certified wood. She is looking to the Commission for any input they may have regarding this effort.

Doug McClelland responded that the Commission's charge is to retain forestland in King County, and he feels that the real issue is promoting the use of local, renewable resources. He feels that the message should be for people to use wood that comes from King County forests, thereby keeping forests and forestry viable.

Kathy Creahan commented that there are no landowners in KC that are FSC certified, and she is concerned that by promoting FSC certified wood, we would be sending the message that people should buy certified wood from the tropics rather than local wood that is not certified but still managed responsibly.

Ken Konigsmark suggested that a "Puget Sound Fresh" program for wood might be a good idea but would require a lot of education about the value of working forestland before the public would buy into it.

Steve Ketz cautioned that the County should not align itself with a particular certification program at the risk of alienating any landowner who chooses for whatever reason not to pursue that particular program.

Doug summarized that above all else we should encourage people to think about where their wood is coming from.

Benj concluded that perhaps the County could promote local wood more easily if it were certified, and that the County might be able to help small-landowners get certified by subsidizing the costs. Doug feels that the Commission should follow what is going on with certification, but there is no action for them to take at this point.

King County Forestland Management

Kathy gave a summary of the King County DNR/Parks reorganization. In their review of the reorganization the KC Council requested that there be an Office of Rural and Resource Lands separate from other sections in the Water and Land Resources Division. The Council also asked for a report on how DNR intends to manage the County-owned lands that were previously managed by Parks.

The Forestry Program has expanded by adopting an urban forestry program.

Regarding the management of natural lands, staff is currently undergoing a process of categorizing County-owned land as Recreational, Ecological, Resource, or Multiple Use (primarily ecological and recreational). There are four properties that have been identified as working forest: Taylor Mtn, Mitchell Hill, Sugarloaf and Ring Hill.

Fred McCarty suggested that there should be a one-page summary for each property summarizing why it was purchased and what the management objectives are.

The County is still trying to decide how all of the properties that will be the responsibility of the Office of Rural and Resource Lands will be managed. At this point, there will likely be one person overseeing a "Natural Lands" program, a volunteer coordinator, four interns from UW CFR doing inventory work, and the existing staff to provide expertise when appropriate.

Doug suggested that the Commission form a sub-committee to help the County address the management of these lands. Ken, Steve Ketz and Doug agreed to meet sometime in the next couple of weeks. Doug will ask Gordon Bradley and Bill Kombol to join as well.

Next meeting - Wednesday, October 17 at 10:00 at Mercerview Community Center