

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting  
Thursday, September 8, 2016, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair); Bernie McKinney, Green River Coalition (Vice Chair); Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Rex Thompson, forester; Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Monica Priebe, Green River College; Steven Mullen-Moses, Snoqualmie Tribe; Doug Schindler, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; Grady Steere, Campbell Global; Dick Ryon, rural city resident

Guests: Donna Brathovde, Friends of Rock Creek Valley; Laurie Benson, Washington Department of Natural Resources

King County Staff: Christine Jensen, Garrett Holbrook, Richard Martin, Kristi McClelland and Linda Vane

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

**Motions**

Motion 1- 0916 That the minutes of the July 14, 2016 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2- 0916 That the changes in the proposed revisions to the 'Rural Forest Commission Policies and Procedures' be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 3-0916 That additional 1-hour meetings be scheduled on the third Thursday of each month that the Commission does not hold one of its regular 3-hour meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 4-0916 That the Rural Forest Commission send a letter to the Council expressing support for the Executive's recommendation to delete 2012 Comprehensive Plan Policy I-203 b and that the commission offer to send a delegation of one or more people who are conversant, interested and knowledgeable to converse with the Council about this. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Developing a comprehensive definition of "forestry"**

Nate Veranth, Commission Chair

Nate introduced the topic, explaining that at the July Rural Forest Commission (Commission) meeting Randy Sandin of the Department of Development and Environmental Review had said that the department was planning to rework portions of the county land use code to move away from using tables as a means of organizing permitted uses and related issues. As an early part of that effort the Agriculture Commission developed a definition of 'agriculture', so Randy had asked the Commission to come up with a corresponding definition of 'forestry'. Nate reflected that the Agriculture Commission had needed several meetings to work through their definition.

Nate suggested the group brainstorm and then sort it out later into categories. The Commission brainstormed an extensive list of actions that could constitute the practice of forestry. There was also a significant discussion of how cultural practices might best be captured in the definition.

Action: Staff will develop a draft definition from the brainstormed list. The topic will be on the November meeting agenda

### **Proposed revisions to the Rural Forest Commission Policies and Procedures**

Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

After a period of discussion the revisions to the general 'Rural Forest Commission Policies and Procedures' were adopted by unanimous vote.

The Commission next discussed revising the meeting schedule. Nate summarized discussion from the July meeting. Linda explained the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and the County's technical capabilities for holding video and telephone conferencing. Monica said Green River College would soon have I-TV capability and could host video conferencing on campus as well.

After an extensive discussion the Commission decided to schedule one-hour study sessions and discussions of non-controversial subjects at 8:30 a.m. in the months in which the regular three-hour meetings are not held (February, April, June, August, October, December). These meetings would be held via conference call and could be cancelled at the discretion of the Chair. The public, staff and commission members would be able to attend the meetings at a public location.

Motion 2- 0916 That the changes in the proposed revisions to the 'Rural Forest Commission Policies and Procedures' be approved. The motion passed unanimously

Motion 3- 0916 That additional 1-hour meetings be scheduled on the third Thursday of each month that the Commission does not hold one of its regular 3-hour meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

### **King County Comprehensive Plan**

Garrett Holbrook, Legislative Aide, King County Council

Garrett Holbrook was joined by Christine Jensen, Principal Legislative Analyst for the King County Council. Christine handed out information on the Council [process](#) and timeline for reviewing and amending the [Executive's Proposed 2016 Comprehensive Plan](#). Christine explained that the Council's Transportation, Economy and Environment (TrEE) Committee was in the process of developing amendments to the Executive's Proposed Plan, which would ultimately be conveyed to the full Council for consideration. She provided an overview of the Council's key concerns, which included equity and social justice, climate change, and the county's responsibilities as a local service provider. A discussion ensued, including questions from the commission members.

Doug Schindler asked if there was any movement on the issue of adequate funding for rural services, referring to the change in the tax base of the unincorporated area, which had reduced revenues to support services such as roads. He concluded that more education is needed to raise awareness of the problem.

Doug McClelland asked about the Policy I-203 provision related to a mine reclamation demonstration project, which the Executive had proposed for deletion and the TrEE Committee had been considering adding back into the Comprehensive Plan with a sunset provision. Christine provided a summary of this particular section in I-203 and the history. She explained that the question before the Council was whether

to allow consideration of such a proposal on an annual cycle rather than the 4-year cycle rather than on the merits of the potential project for which this demonstration project policy was conceived.

An extended discussion of the mine reclamation pilot project provision in Policy I-203 by commission members followed. Among the points made were:

- King County Code already allows for developers to propose demonstration projects on the 4-year Comprehensive Plan update cycle. The proponents of the proposed I-203 demonstration project could apply in 2020.
- If the project proponents waited until 2020, the trees would grow and timber would increase in value. The value to the county as open space could increase also.
- It would be important for the Council to think about making special allowances for demonstration projects and what that such policies cause. “You don’t want to make it so you cannot do pilot projects but you want to make it hard enough that you can say ‘this is a bad idea, let’s throw it out.’ ”
- The characteristics of the proposed project such as rural-to-rural transfer of development rights and urban development in the Forest Production District make this policy the opposite of Comprehensive Plan objectives and growth management.
- “This sounds a lot like the ‘rural village’ idea that was floating around at one time and that has been debunked. We have moved beyond that. The idea of showing how rural to rural [transfers of development rights] will work does not seem viable.”
- Research, including international research, has shown that seven conditions would be needed for common management of resource land to succeed. Factors such as clear measures of success, a consistent group of people who would develop community, and community use and need would be required. To say that someone should care about forest management because they bought a house in a community with shared responsibility for a forest tract would not work.

Motion 4-0916 That the Rural Forest Commission send a letter to the Council expressing support for the Executive’s recommendation to delete 2012 Comprehensive Plan Policy I-203 b and that the commission offer to send a delegation of one or more people who are conversant, interested and knowledgeable to converse with the Council about this. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements**

*Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)* – Doug McClelland reported that it is busy season for recreation this year. DNR is building trails in the I-90 corridor in cooperation with Mountains to Sound Greenway and Evergreen Mountain Bike Association among others. Doug described some of the projects and the progress made so far. He reported that permits have been turned in for the new Granite Creek and Teneriff trailheads that DNR hopes to build this winter. He also reported on some conversation area expansions that are underway

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on November 10, 2016, at the Preston Community Center.

Commission Liaison: Linda Vane, [linda.vane@kingcounty.gov](mailto:linda.vane@kingcounty.gov)