



## **Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #14**

**Location:** Rabbit Creek Community Church Auditorium

**Date:** October 22, 2007 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

### **AGENDA**

1. Introduction – agenda review, introductions of CAC, consultants, guests, public attendees (10 minutes)

#### Committee

- David Lappi
- Carol Fries
- John Reese - absent
- Lori Davey
- Niel Thomas
- John Weddleton
- Chris Hamre
- Connie Yoshimura - absent
- Dee High - absent
- Victor Mollozzi
- Fred Jenkins - absent
- David Beveridge - absent
- Wayne Westberg

#### Community member(s)

- John Fowler

#### Staff

- Chris Beck – Agnew::Beck
- Heather Stewart – Agnew::Beck
- Tamas Deak – kpb architects
- Kristi Bischofberger – MOA  
PM&E Watershed Management

## **2. DEBRIEF FROM OCTOBER WORKSHOPS/ NEXT STEPS IN PROCESS**

- Chris gave overview of how work will proceed in the next several weeks
- Discussion – reviewed initial outline of framework plan intended to guide DCONs in their assigned work:

#### **Allocation Targets**

- Plan is still using number of units specified in Anchorage 2020?
  - Yes, but if that number doesn't work, we will have to report that the allocated growth for the Hillside is not viable. We start with 2020 allocation as a target, and then look more closely to see if these targets are actually practical in terms of development costs, development standards, and environmental constraints

- Expectation of growth is driven by more than 2020 targets – it’s the build-out of the private land on the Hillside as a whole whether or not 2020 allocation targets are considered. Expected population increase might not be reached soon, but ultimately we probably will reach it.
- If we don’t want to repeat the current mode of unplanned development on the Hillside, we have to use some number as a programming exercise to understand what growth patterns to encourage on the Hillside. We might end up reporting that 4,000-6,000 units is too large or too small a number, but we need a starting point. Currently the consultants are charged with looking at 4,000 – 6,000 units in the Hillside, so that’s the number we’re using.

### **Runoff**

- Seems to be a clear distinction between runoff (surface water issue) and drainage (groundwater issue). The plan doesn’t say anything about runoff, making it seem that runoff is not really an issue on the Hillside.
  - It’s really more a disruption of the normal flow
  - Kristi Bischofberger confirmed that the Planning Team is looking at both runoff and drainage, but there’s not much money in the scope for groundwater, so not mapping groundwater flows, for instance.
  - Runoff is coming out of subdivisions; need to look downstream and make sure driveway culverts are not obstructed. Problems are more serious in winter.
  - The Planning Team is looking at road cuts and methods for dealing with them (groundwater issue). Primarily, we need to make sure ditches next to roads are deep enough.
  - We do need to look at groundwater flows, for when subdivisions come in and disrupt groundwater flows when installing sewers/septic. It impacts property owners downslope.
  - Kristi Bischofberger concurred. Drains are sent out to the ditch, and folks are going to have to make sure there’s some drainage-way that is capable of holding both surface runoff and groundwater water directed to those same drainages.
  - Shallow groundwater is the main cause for drainage issues on the hillside. It used to be defined as surface water – state definition used to be anything shallower than 30 feet. Now that has been changed, allowing more development, and also more development challenges.
  - We have to address runoff as well as groundwater. Even though the water goes into your lawn, it still goes into shallow groundwater, resulting in more flow and more concentration in certain areas. A higher percentage stays shallow; it might accelerate the quantity because less water sinks deeper.
  - The changes proposed in Title 21 and the studies being done for this plan have been talking about runoff and stormwater, which are great to address but are not going to solve the problems because mostly they are

due to shallow groundwater (a characteristic of Hillside's topography – it's not going to get deeper).

- Kristi Bischofberger confirmed that the Title 21 rewrite includes a new DCM (Design Criteria Manual) with new development standards.

### **Service Districts**

- Regarding possible future service districts, when I talk to people, they say, "You'll do like Eagle River, right?" So how does the Eagle River system work and why are we not looking at that approach?
  - We ought to look at that as a model; it might be a viable alternative for the next HDP document.
  - Lori Davey explained how the Chugiak-Eagle River Road Service Area works: Eagle River banded together, with a representative appointed through their community council. They have one overriding contract, 2 employees for the city (contracted back to the city, but retired city employees who do not receive benefits), 1 administrative person, 1 plow-truck driver, and 2 plow-trucks. They have a work list for the contractor and bid out major work. They got \$8million from the State to do improvements. They have been able to pave all of their roads since the 1970s, and they have a drainage plan.
  - Because the Chugiak-Eagle River Road Service Area deals with roads and drainage, they have the capacity to do capital projects and better planning. It encompasses 1 whole watershed.
- If watersheds would be used as the basis to service districts, how many watersheds are we dealing with on the Hillside? (Answer: south to north)
  - Potter Valley
  - Little Survivor Creek
  - Little Rabbit Creek
  - Rabbit Creek
  - Furrow Creek
  - South Fork / Campbell Creek
- Can we narrow that down to 3? Or you'll start running out of volunteers.

### **Roads**

- Does Eagle River have state roads like Hillside? Yes, and State funds maintenance; not aware of any roads that they've built, but they've improved some existing roads.
- If we're going to develop vacant areas on the Hillside, there has to be some kind of major access (we can't expect a developer to put a major access route). Roads are intimately related to drainage issues.
  - developers are shunting all their water to the roads.
  - we're dealing with shallow bedrock – we can't just build a road anywhere on the Hillside.
  - But if the roads are designed and built to state standards, wouldn't that avoid the drainage problems?
- It's clear from the workshops that many Hillsideers don't understand who owns and is responsible for which roads on the Hillside.

- Group agreed on the need to involve the State in the discussion of the intersection of Goldenview and Rabbit Creek. Nobody has come up with a viable plan for fixing that intersection, and it is clearly critical to address that intersection if there is any intent to plan for development in that area.
- There is also a need to improve *existing* substandard roads – it’s easy to forget that there are many existing substandard roads that are maintained by informal neighbor agreements. An overarching road improvement mechanism may be necessary, although the group would anticipate a lot of resistance.
- Connie Yoshimura and Lori Davey drove to the end of Connie’s property at Potter Valley. Connie is hoping for some State funds for roads in her subdivision, but there is no maintenance back there and the State doesn’t pay for improvements without maintenance.
- The concept of the State AK coming up with much money for roads shouldn’t be counted on as a strategy. It doesn’t look like that’s going to be the case: it wasn’t the case when State had more money available, so we can’t expect to see it with budgetary restrictions. And roads will cost an enormous amount of money.
- In planning for future growth infrastructure (reactively or proactively) versus existing infrastructure, we have to answer the questions: Who pays for it, when and how? What is there currently and how to best manage that infrastructure?
- We can hit up developers in some cases, but not always.
- When you jam a high-density subdivision in an area with infrastructure designed for low-density, you get the kind of problems we’re seeing on the Hillside. For example, with leapfrogging subdivisions, local roads start to function as collectors, so we find ourselves talking about retroactively upgrading Hillside infrastructure.
- There is a difference between being in a LRSA and being in nothing at all. Do we have numbers about how many roads are in LRSAs versus outside of them? (Group believes about 40% are not).
- How high does the price of oil have to go before the State will spend money on roads? What happens as oil prices go up?
- In our goals for the next segment of the HDP, can we drop the idea of the Municipality taking over State roads? (Yes)
- Currently, rural road classification allows for gravel roads. Can we come up with standards for gravel/dirt roads? Something to work toward where dirt/gravel works?
- We should not have sidewalks or paved trails in the Hillside. If we can’t even maintain roads, how can we maintain paved pedestrian paths? As it is, developers are going to end up having to maintain the roads.
- Paving is the problem – it’s good to provide pedestrian access separate from roads, but paving is expensive and doesn’t last. Separation is the key.
  - But gravel or rap would be needed; dirt would just turn to mud.
  - Who’s going to snowblow/plow/maintain these paths in winter?

## **Parks, Chugach Access & Related Payment for Service Issues**

- The CAC voiced a concern about a disturbing comment that the Hillside is not paying its fair share for parks and recreation.
  - Response: There are a few select areas, but overall the Parks and Recreation Department's perspective is that Hillside does pay its share
- Can the demographics portion of the HDP identify what portion of Anchorage taxes Hillside pays (e.g., from Tischler report)?
  - Hillside has fewer people and more expensive houses, so perhaps Hillside pays a higher share of taxes than the rest of Anchorage.
  - It would be interesting to see how much the Hillside pays *per capita* in property taxes versus the rest of Anchorage.
- Prospect Trailhead was the edge of a subdivision until the city started receiving complaints about too many people on the edge of roads, so they moved the trailhead into the park. But Chugach is so big; they can easily give up a few acres to develop as parking lots. The Hillside doesn't need a Glen Alps level of trailhead every mile, just enough to make it attractive to people to spread out. The Parks shouldn't have a problem using parkland for parking, but they may not have the financial resources to build the parking.
- The big issue for the Municipality is the risk of closing traditional access points through subdivision tactics (e.g. Bear Valley), hence the need to create and maintain a trails/greenspace corridor, working with developers. The Parks Department seems willing to do that.
- Chugach has not developed trailheads because of a push to close trailheads, putting us in the interim period where you do have access but not enough parking, etc. The State would come in and develop but the Muni access points (Tamas – didn't quite understand what he was saying – not sure if this is important or not)
- Basically, the State has too much land that it cannot afford to maintain.
- Is there a "Friends of the Park" or something? Yes, the Chugach Park Access Coalition. It has volunteers, but the DNR is grossly restricted in its funding and the Legislature has been actively trying to decrease funding for the park.
  - ...because if you develop parking through a non-profit, you can bypass many things that drive the cost of construction/development through the roof.
  - But with trails access, you don't have a big, conspicuous constituency; you'd need leadership – you can't do it all with volunteers.

## **On-Site & Water and Sewer**

- Do we need rules about maintaining/replacing onsite systems?
  - The recommendation for onsite maintenance is pumping once a year (to once every 2 years) and flushing yeast/septic maintenance product
  - But how are you going to enforce regulation of septic maintenance? If there's no enforcement, what's the point?
  - The most important thing is not so much getting individuals to pump their systems; enforcement is more important in subdivisions with

chronic problems. And an Advantec system is still way cheaper than public water-sewer.

- Can the Planning Team please revise its treatment of these issues, again in the whitepaper – it is presented in a way that makes people think water-sewer is much less expensive than it really is/would be.
  - People think there would be a line drawn between areas where you can and cannot have public water/sewer, but if we instead specified conditions under which you could extend public water/sewer, we wouldn't need to draw a line.
- Correction about a reference to “Community water & wastewater” – that should read “*public* water & wastewater.”
- Is there an average turnover of homes on the Hillside, when we can expect that systems would be looked at?
  - Anchorage is a pretty mobile population; people tend to move every 5-7 years.
  - The concern for failing systems is that many homeowners are totally clueless; they think their septic is working just fine when it is not.
  - Advantec systems have monitoring built in.
- The utility says “we follow development.” It could be that through this land use plan, we might say that's better to increase density in some areas that would require running a line in. Don't know if that's leading or following: yes, it's led by the Land Use Plan, but not necessarily the developer. However, the Municipality has no financing mechanism to start an extension of public water/sewer.
- Make it clear what you're talking about. When you say neighborhood treatment systems, what you're really looking for is a community drainage system/leach field. If everyone has Advantec on their site, you don't have the monitoring needs.
  - But if soils are bad enough that even the Advantec system won't work, you might need pipes through the neighborhood to a common leach field or common Advantec system.
- Do we have numbers on how many there are? (About 20. It's a large number because many subdivisions were done so poorly to begin with.)
- A normal onsite system doesn't do any treatment; Advantec systems do a primary treatment before sending effluent to the leach field.
- It would be so easy to require everyone to do a nitrate test on their well-water, with subsequent tests dictated on what the results were: if under 5mg/liter (ppm), the property owner wouldn't need to test for another 3 years. The city has a record of all systems – a mass-mailing could be done. It only costs \$18 to do test: all the individual has to do is get the bottle, which has directions, take it in and get the lab report. Or the lab could mail results to the homeowner and to the Municipality.
  - Why test for nitrates and nothing else? (Nitrates themselves aren't that dangerous – only for certain infants, but if you have nitrates present, it's an indicator that there may possibly be effluent, fertilizer, or some

natural cause of elevated nitrates. When you get up to 10mg/liter (ppm), it's generally an indicator of something. It's sort of a canary in the coal mine – nitrates themselves are not a problem, but a concentration of them lets you know there might be an issue.

### **Land Use Options/Land Use Subdistricts**

- Regarding the “out of sight-out of mind” bullet – if we're trying to accommodate 4,000-6,000 units, how is anything going to be out of sight?
  - In theory it may be “out of sight-out of mind,” but drainage problems, etc. will still exist.
  - It's more an issue of magnitude –Prominence Point is an example of a development that has more impacts than another subdivision down the road.
  - But people in the area have paid equivalent levels of attention to these different developments.
  - For the allocation, it may be better to use percentages, rather than raw numbers.
  - The Municipality's Planners did try to go in and weight zoning capacity based on what is likely to be built. The exact numbers may be off, but the magnitude should be about right.
  - We plan to re-analyze the Muni estimate of build-out through the HDP.
- Public comment about the BLM lots: This area has large lots, the Rabbit Creek park, Rabbit Creek watershed, wildlife corridor, etc. – breaking it down to 1.25 acre is within its carrying capacity. I thought the HDP was intended to address developments experiencing problems, not developments that have been around for 40-60 years without troubles. Let's not spend our energy and resources trying to fix something that's not broken. Let's address problem areas on Hillside, not create problems.
- We need to look at undeveloped areas and determine what they can and cannot support.
  - But that's squishy; it's partly based on engineering – if you send sewer up there you can support much higher densities.
- It came up at the workshops: Hillside is frustrated that more people are coming here (to Alaska). But people are coming and staying here whether we want them to or not. 4,000 – 6,000 units is allowable under current zoning; rather than let this growth happen in an unplanned, haphazard manner, let's figure out how to do it so we can use existing infrastructure which is much more cost effective.

### **3. Commercial Development**

- Discussion started with distribution and review of a set of background information prepared by John Weddleton
- If we've identified that the Hillside already has a lot of commercial lots, then why do we have to convert some residential to commercial?

- We need to state what we're here to address: is it the commercial we've already got or new development?
  - If we're trying to open the door to new commercial, I can't get behind that.
- The other issue is, what is currently zoned, if anything, for commercial on the Hillside? If we already have land zoned commercial, how is it fair to the owner to downzone the land?
  - Compared to the entire subarea, existing commercial is very minimal.
- How do we define commercial? What is the point where we don't like it anymore?
  - If it doesn't draw more than the normal amount of neighborhood traffic, we don't care so much, but if it draws more, we don't like it.
  - If it has that flat-roofed, commercial look, we don't like it, but if it blends in with housing, ok.
- If currently existing commercial is illegal (in nonconformance with zoning), that is another issue that might need to be addressed.
- If we have development standards, we build better. Can we get standards in place so these things go in a better direction?
  - I don't understand standards as they exist right now.
  - Can we create a lowest common denominator that could apply no matter what use on the Hillside? Create a set of overlay restrictions?
- But there is a fear of opening the door a crack, and then commercial development going crazy. But perhaps the door is already open and we need to define it, put some standards in place.
- If we define Commercial development in terms of what exists, where it is currently allowed, that's fine. But I don't want to open the door for changing zoning. So, ok if we're talking about development standards that would upgrade the quality of parcels where commercial currently exists.
- We could say no expansion of commercial and put development standards in place so that if anyone ever gets through that, there will be guidelines in place as a backup plan.
- We need to assign someone to find the answers to these questions. We can't just sit here and poll everyone. CAC requested that the next part of the HDP process answer some of these questions.

#### 4. ONSITE

- Lori Davey and Wayne Weddleton handed out packets of the CAC nitrates analysis. Discussion to happen via email.
- Wayne remapped a lot of the onsite data for the community wells.
- Their findings: Still unclear if "statistically significant" applies to the data or the trend. Outliers might be creating the trend, and/or there might be false readings.
- Work in progress. Incoming data will be added.

## **5. WRAP-UP (5 MIN)**

- Assignments
  - AB to send CAC a copy of the schedule
  - Look at Eagle River model for drainage (Kurt Bauer, HDR)
  - Address CAC request to assign a DCON to answer Niel's questions about commercial
- Next meeting
  - November 26, 2007