



Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #21

Location: Rabbit Creek Community Church Auditorium

Date: February 18, 2008 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

NOTES

1. Introduction – introductions of CAC, consultants, guests, public attendees (John Reese - chair) (10 minutes)

CAC

- Niel Thomas
- Dee High
- Chris Hamre
- Wayne Westberg
- Dave Lappi
- John Weddleton
- Carol Fries

Staff

- Chris Beck
- Heather Stewart
- Dave Coolidge
- Glenn Foust
- **Bob - the mystery consultant**

2. Review Framework Plan and PowerPoint Summary.

- The Framework Plan is a summary of the detailed reports each DCON is preparing
- Chris walked the group through the summary PowerPoint presentation
- Looking for feedback from the CAC: Is this going to engage the public? Have we addressed the right issues?

Discussion - Introduction

- The opening quote: "...Hillside is not really part of Anchorage" maybe doesn't send the right image/message? It's a little too inflammatory...
 - Could just end it at "doorstep."
 - The consultants will try to find another quote
- Why bring up commercial since so many are against it?
 - Because the 2020 plan explicitly asks us to look at the possibility of commercial on the Hillside, recognizing that it's unpopular
 - (John W.) If all the vacant land became fully built out, then if you can do anything to decrease driving, you're making the world a better place, but I still can't sit here and look at the map and say: here's a good place for commercial, as opposed to some other place.

- A number of vacant parcels in the Southeast Hillside are currently being proposed for residential development subject to the constraints of Title 21 or the HDP
- When you get through the next few months of public review, and if there's still a resounding "no" to commercial, how will you handle that?
 - Probably, we would keep the option in the Plan, with a summary of dissenting opinion from public and the CAC; we will document what we've heard and leave the final decision to the Assembly.
 - In other areas where there is more general agreement, we will bring those together as well
- (Chris H.) I believe that leaving commercial in there will put CAC consensus at risk.
 - The Planning Team is aware of this and haven't decided whether to carry it forward or not; not at that point yet.
- Would it be more appropriate for the CAC to write its own statement and append it to the report?
 - We don't want to misrepresent the CAC, but would prefer to write the plan jointly with the CAC. Where there is dissent, the plan will present the differing opinions.
 - You might consider bringing the second paragraph on page 2 "Purpose of this document is to..." forward in the report; make it clear there's not an agenda.
- On page 3 where you have as a starting point on the overall HDP goal, is that a quote?
 - That's carried forward from the Issues Goals Choices document.
 - But this does not come across as a land use plan so much as a plan to develop the infrastructure necessary to accommodate a pre-determined number of units, revealing one expectation in this approach.
 - It is problematic, but that's the reality of our assignment.
 - Shouldn't the assignment be determining what level of development the Hillside can handle?
 - At the HALO meeting, people responded well to green infrastructure and some other aspects; we also need to emphasize that a little more, so people don't get stuck on aspects they don't like.
 - You might look at the HDP goals as a starting point for this section
- It seems fair to state that there is growing pressure for trails; is it valid to mention that in the context of general growth pressures?
 - Public use like Glen Alps [didn't catch the whole response]
- Line 3, page 4: should that say forum for public comment?
 - It should be "summary" and it should say "on" rather than "to"
- Do we have a solid number of units built since 2020?
 - It keeps coming up; I haven't gotten a firm number yet.
 - As of 2007, there was capacity for an additional 4,600 plus Legacy Pointe
 - You need to make these numbers clearer – use indentation and footnotes
- Use "inadequate" or "insufficient" rather than "lagging" on page 5
- On page 6, delete "agreement" on line 9
- (Wayne W.) Please use "prohibitively" costly or "impractical" in the next-to-last paragraph

Discussion – Land Use

- I've got 2.5 acres, one house, and one shop that's been grandfathered. If you increase the zoning to 4 units per acre, do I start getting assessed at the value of those 4 units per acre? A lot of people are worried about this. People are forced out of having large lots by being assessed at the maximum developable units.
 - That seems unfair; Chris Beck believes that building out to 4 units/acre will take a very long time.
- Does that mean you will have to move your house to subdivide? I've seen it in Chicago.
 - You can't do that subdivision until you have some aggregation (Chris drew a picture to illustrate)
 - This is a critical point that will have to be addressed
- Changes in land use policies/rules of engagement affect the market.
 - In my neighborhood we're getting dinged based on the values of neighboring properties.
 - If you zone to 4 units/acre, is there a zoning designation for that or do you need to create new zoning? Theoretically, you could maybe get around it using a PUD, and then until you get the conditional use for your lots you couldn't be assessed for increased density until you get the conditional use.
 - The city could assess at a higher rate.
 - In this document it might be enough to raise that as an issue.
 - There is a limit in the amount of increased assessed value of a property per year, but it should be area-wide, not just Hillside.
- Wayne W. questions the use of "marginal" to describe water/wastewater systems.
- On page 10, 3rd bullet: "history of septic tank problems" should be "septic system problems"
- The plan should say "Central Hillside" rather than "Middle Hillside;" Hillside residents tend to consider everything above Hillside Drive "Upper Hillside," so you're possibly demoting properties by calling them "Middle Hillside."
 - Maybe call it "Southeast Hillside"?
 - Or tweak the line a little bit, although we're talking about development potential, which doesn't follow colloquial "Upper Hillside" boundaries
 - What is that line? – It's really a line showing where the vacant land is.
- On page 6, "water and sewer" being more costly: we (the CAC) can make the inference that because water and sewer service is so expensive, it requires higher density, but you might want to spell that out for the general public.
- Are you trying to avoid talking about the urban/rural divide line in this report?
 - Chris Beck – I'm just not sure it's all that helpful; some categories of services extend across the urban/rural line.
 - You'll need a paragraph explaining that.
 - The urban/rural distinction is not about a lack of services, but level of service – on the Hillside you have a "rural" level of service for police. Defining what's urban and what's rural is part of our marching orders from 2020. We need to decide to do it or not, but say that.

- Carol will not support a line drawn on the map – different services have different levels of services across the Hillside and she doesn't see that changing.
- But if you don't deal with it it's going to linger and cause trouble.
- On page 9, regarding moving the sewer boundary to Elmore: AWWU currently has the whole area for water service; AWWU claims the water service boundary does run along Elmore.
 - It's a naming issue and needs to be made more precise.
- The subdivision graphic is problematic: people are going to do the math based on the number of lots in that graphic. Can you show it with no increase in lots?
 - Not really. We can reduce the number of increased lots, but if it's going to happen, developers need some sort of incentive. I would argue that we should throw in something, but maybe this goes too far. We need to work with the Title 21 process to articulate a clearer cluster subdivision model.
 - Maybe you could show a 10% increase in the number of units, but have the same number of lots.
 - When you develop the more challenging lots (which is what is left in the Southeast Hillside), you have to comply with stronger drainage standards, so the developers will have to do all this anyway.
 - Perhaps you should take out the lot lines but leave the housing units to show a cluster of housing rather than a cluster of lots.
 - If you don't have the same number of lots, you're mixing apples and oranges and not showing the contrast. You're giving people the impression of a bonus that people are going to focus on. If I put money in stock, nobody guarantees me a return.
 - But you still have to create the same amount of road and other infrastructure, so you need the increase in allowed units to show smaller costs for that infrastructure investment on a per-unit basis.
 - Developers have told us that buyers want lot square footage, not housing units.
 - Is that really the case? Because in the Lower 48 there are many people who are buying into these conservation developments with small private lots and large common open spaces that they don't have to maintain themselves (i.e. huge lawns they don't have to mow). It's a change in thought process and a different generation. Anchorage developers say people don't appreciate that here yet. But it's coming.
- Where did that idea to downzone R1A in the Southeast Hillside come from?
 - From talking to the guy who owns that land. It's too expensive and difficult to extend the kind of infrastructure needed to develop at R1A density. It's not going to happen.
- Is this changing your numbers or is this what you anticipated (when coming up with the 4,600 units)?
 - It's not changing the numbers.
- What is this about moving the sewer service boundary?
 - This whole area is currently within the certificated sewer service boundary. This option would take the area out of the "recommended maximum perimeter of public sewage" boundary line.

- Regarding the “This/Not this” graphic: don’t you want to make the driveway going down the hill from the road toward the house in for the well-planned model?
 - We could, although houses are built on both sides of the street on Hillside developments.
 - Chris talked about hillside development innovations – custom built and designed houses on hillsides that could be applied to the Anchorage Hillside.
- Regarding the standards on vegetation retention at subdivision scale: It seems like Potter Valley is more attractive than Prominence Pointe because it has more vegetation retention. Is that right?
 - Developers want to spend as little money as possible, and clearing takes money, so actually they want to clear as little as possible.
 - Trailbait Drive in Eagle River has much of the original vegetation because of steep slopes
- Regarding expansion and contraction of zoning: What’s the deal with the landowners? Is expanding the service area going to take a vote of landowners?
 - It would be managed block by block, homeowner by homeowner.
 - Landowners would have a choice as to whether they want to take advantage of it.
 - The area north of Huffman is in ARDSA already; doesn’t force until landowners choose to act upon it.
 - The most logical place is down Elmore, but with no talk of sewer. If it includes sewer, we’re going to have to go back and redo it.
 - The goal is to move sewer.
- Bullet 2, page 13: I think it’s a stretch to say that putting commercial in these places means a greater proximity of commercial services for children and others who don’t drive. People don’t drive; kids don’t walk anywhere these days. You’re not serving too many pedestrians, and people are going to hone in on that.
- Does the Old Seward commercial node assume that Old Seward will be upgraded? If not, I think this creates a traffic problem.
 - Traffic impacts are a valid concern; we’ll make that a consideration.
- When you say “20 parcels are designated commercial”: the word “designate” doesn’t have any real meaning; some of those are grandfathered.
- This statement about 269 acres of commercial property on the Hillside gives the impression that it’s in large chunks; make it clear that it’s actually in small parcels.
- Greenhouses are allowed on R-6.
- If a commercial establishment is built and it fails, that’s worse than not having it at all. I don’t think a business like the ones proposed will be viable for 20-30 years. I think it’s a good idea to have a little store to serve the Hillside, especially when it’s built out and there’s a market, but I don’t want to see some business go in there and fail, leaving an empty, abandoned building along the road.
- If it’s commercial, it needs an alley behind it.
- What is the advantage of zoning to allow commercial now rather than wait for a businessperson with a vision and a plan to ask for a rezone?
 - There would be no precedent to allow it.
- This plan needs to define what commercial means and how it would be developed.

- In defining a commercial area, you can get into incredible detail with the new Title 21 zoning, and with design and use standards. You can really specify exactly what you want up there.

3. In-depth review of Onsite and Public Water and Sewer.

- Consultants from Larsen Consulting Group presented the work they've been doing.

Discussion

- Be clear/precise about the name of the service boundary you're talking about.
- When you say "...amend Title 15 and Title 21 as appropriate," you mean use Title 15 and Title 21 – for what, exactly? How do you establish groundwater protection as an ongoing public priority?
 - It's been discussed before in the 1982 report
 - Ok, it's answered further down.
- The \$300,000 is for what, exactly?
 - Probably some additional personnel, testing, studies done from time to time. That's a pretty rough number at this point; it could change.
- So you're talking about \$10/person or roughly \$35/household if the entire population carried the cost of it.
 - Yes.
- I'm surprised to learn that collectively, the Hillside only taps about 5% of all water available on the Hillside. Then I think about population growth and figure that the percentage of water used will only go up to maybe 7%, I'm left with a sense of "so what?" What's the problem?
 - Good point; we'll make that clearer.
- Who pays for Dan Roth and his department now? What does that cost? Do we as consumers of onsite services pay for that? We should (I believe in the pay-as-you-go philosophy), but where does it go from here? Does it take lots of studies or just monitor 40 wells and do better at looking at the data we've been collecting?
 - We don't think the database is currently in any usable shape. It seems like there are quite a few people on the municipal administration end who don't really know what all this data is and how it is (or should be) used. There is a lack of cohesiveness in the data (and the way it was collected).
- We feel that an ounce of prevention here is worth a pound of cure. This is a check-up program for the water system.
 - (Wayne W.) The issue here is not whether wells are going dry; it is that there is a slight growing trend of nitrates in the 40 wells. I agree with Dave Black: there is a trend and we don't know why. We should monitor it; we have data, let's use it.
- 4,000-5,000 wells
- The idea we're exploring/recommending is bringing all of this water quality data collection into a single database that can be more effectively used.
 - I would suggest talking about all the good stuff you want to do and why, and *then* offering the price tag at the end of the report.
- If this integrated database incorporates the individual residential wells by trained people, is that another cost? How much is that?

- That's part of the \$35/household.
- So would we designate specific wells by location for monitoring on a consistent basis?
 - Yes, rather than monitor all wells, we would come up with a representative sampling of Hillside wells and consistently monitor those.
- Was there a pilot program for this?
 - There is a pilot program on arsenic.
- On page 4, the first 2 bullets: these appear on the surface to address primarily surface water issues as opposed to groundwater issues. So how do they affect groundwater?
 - Some of the drainage concepts coincide with what we're doing for onsite. Little things have a cumulative impact, so we do think it's important for people to keep these things in mind.
 - So it's just looking at what affecting the water before it percolates and becomes groundwater.
 - The 1982 plan cited some instances of surface water /drainage problems causing groundwater problems
 - Maybe you should move those 2 bullets to the end of the list and put all the distinctly groundwater points first.
- What do you mean by "onsite systems maintained by trained operators"?
 - A Class C license is all you need to run a neighborhood onsite system.
- There is a perception that holding tanks are wrong; I think that needs to be changed; you can poke a hole in it and drain it into a drainfield
- Homeowners are charged with maintenance and monitoring, but the way these systems are made, the homeowners can't necessarily do that. I would recommend training for homeowners, once we get risers to the surface. If the homeowner isn't willing to do it, they should hire someone to do it for them.
 - A riser is a 24" manhole cover
- Why not just send a video camera down there?
 - You can, but they don't tell you a lot. There's a lot that you can visually see when you open it up that you can't see on camera.
- One option is to have drainfields in parallel strips with valves, so you can let a failed one drain into the new one, then switch the valve after a few years when the formerly failed one has recovered.
- Larsen recommends shallow trench systems; they have a more aerated field that does more treatment for the system. Deep trenches tend to start failing.
- What's the separation of wells for mountain systems with no soil (bedrock and sand)?
 - One example: set a 200ft minimum buffer between the well and septic – but allow them to be as close as 100ft if you put in secondary treatment
- Neighborhood onsite water systems are good way to go if you can get the area for the drainfields. This option brings a higher level of professional involvement and maintenance.
 - Larsen estimated some community system costs (but made a LOT of assumptions) to give a very rough order of magnitude to compare to public sewer extension.
- Regarding centralized sanitary sewer system extension: it makes engineering sense to extend public sewer to troubled subdivisions right at the end of the pipe, but the per lot cost makes it better to do neighborhood systems up the hill.

- To run the trunk up to Bear Valley would cost on the order of \$60 million; to run it from the end of the pipe would be more like \$1 million.
- Larsen is uncomfortable about giving recommendations based on Lower, Central, or Southeast Hillside geographic designations because the solutions depend upon the topography at the lot-level. Instead they created/are creating a toolbox of onsite solutions that can be applied all over the Hillside on a lot-specific basis.
- Based on some experiences I've had elsewhere in the country, I have some concerns about this point to "phase out deep trenches..." Can you clarify this?
 - Yes, that is based on new construction.
- The group looked at a revised map.
- Suggestions for Larsen's section/presentation were voiced:
 - Try to make more of an outline
 - Bring the statement of the issue forward.
 - More effective sequencing of the presentation is also possible – talk to Chris Beck.
- Would AWWU need to be in charge of clustered neighborhood systems?
 - Some agency needs to have jurisdiction; this plan would need to decide that. Larsen would pick ADEC to do it.
 - The administering agency has to be able to bill people, train people to go maintain these systems, etc. There are private firms, nonprofits, etc. who do this in different parts of the country.
- Where are we on this, really?
 - We need to make those recommendations. ADEC has the expertise to permit it but not to manage it.
- Why can't the neighborhood systems be managed just like public systems?
 - Larsen would not recommend going through private homeowners
- These issues are being discussed between the tech board and AWWU.
 - If we think it's a viable thing and a land use solution, then we need to decide these things.
 - AWWU is coming up with a set of criteria for allowing neighborhood systems
- AWWU doesn't seem to want to talk to Larsen. If this requires a push, it might have to come from the CAC. There is concern that AWWU's criteria will be so restrictive as to make this idea improbable. If it's a good idea, get it into the report and lay out the management-side issues that need to be addressed.

4. Next Steps:

- a. Identify subcommittee members for plan topics
- b. Schedule meetings to further review sections of plan

Discussion

- Big picture: You cancelled tomorrow's meeting; you're going to portion this out among subcommittees, then that's going to feed back into the larger piece again?
 - Yes – Chris reviewed the schedule as of February 18.
 - But generally the principles are here in this document? – Yes.
- Are you going to rework this document by Thursday (for the joint community council meeting)?

- No, we're going to use the PowerPoint on Thursday
- We probably want to get something about what we're currently thinking for the framework plan on the website, but we don't want to send something out prematurely and cause a lot of undue consternation because we haven't worked out the bugs.
Would the PowerPoint on the website work?
 - Yes, that's a good compromise; it's good to get it out there for people to look at and talk about.
 - Don't put it on there until you've got it dressed up, though.
- How do we organize this joint community council meeting?
 - Discussion among the CAC about their role(s) in the joint community councils meeting
- Can we address the issue of replacing lost CAC members?
 - There was a movement to continue with group as it is
 - Then discussion that it would be politically a good move to get a developer to replace Connie.
 - CAC members present decided to have Vic Molozzi (as Vice Chair; John Reese is out of town) ask about getting a developer to replace Connie (Jennifer Johnston already has someone in mind).
 - CAC members present noted the need to bring the new person on fast in order to get them up to speed.

5. Wrap-up (5 min)

- Assignments
 - Next meeting March 17, 2008