



Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #23

Location: Rabbit Creek Community Church Youth Room

Date: April 21, 2008 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

NOTES

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

CAC

- John Weddleton
- Dee High
- Vic Mollozzi
- Dave Lappi
- Niel Thomas
- John Reese
- Wayne Westberg
- Cheri Ford
- Lori Davey
- Carol Fries
- Chris Hamre

Staff

- Chris Beck
- Heather Stewart
- Kristi Bischofberger
- JoAnn Contreras
- Dan Roth
- Tom Nelson
- Mel Langdon

Public

- Suzanne Comellas

2. Welcome to new member(s)

Discussion

- John R gave an overview of upcoming workshops and where the HDP process is right now
- John W. proposed Dee High to fill Connie Yoshimura's vacated seat on the Oversight Committee
- Explanation of how public comment is handled at CAC meetings

3. Update on "Framework Plan"

- Chris B. gave an overview of upcoming workshops, publicity that has gone out so far.

- Deadline for public comment is May 12; expect people to come to workshops or submit comments via mail, electronically, etc.
- Chris gave an overview of some Onsite-related concerns.
- Combining onsite and sewer into one chapter – no bias intended, simply that the issues are intertwined
- Some points missed in the earlier draft: Regarding the statement that on the Hillside most “Onsite systems are well-maintained,” the consultant believes that this cannot be true without larger manhole covers and certification

Discussion

- Is it necessary to make that kind of conclusory statement at all?
 - Trying to assert a general statement about the status quo of the system operations on the Hillside. Not precise, but the best we could craft given the information we have.
 - The manhole piece is not in our standards; this plan is not the place to do that.
 - On page 79, there is some text “...in several areas, individual property owners have been challenged...” that makes it sound like all property owners have problems
- There still appears to be bias on the groundwater issue – when do we get to address these detailed issues? (In May and June)
 - Natural contaminants in groundwater – not aware of arsenic on the Hillside at all...
 - There is some arsenic in one area near a lake, occurs naturally due to some chemical process.
- (John R) Just to remind everyone: an enormous amount of comments came in to these guys; we will have a chance to talk about the details, the meaning of words and whether or not there is bias. Today we’re preparing for the workshops.
- (Chris B.) We received comments on both sides of any given issue in this document; we tried to be as neutral and objective as possible.

Tom N. gave a presentation on the numbers, starting point for the population growth and dwelling unit allocations for the Hillside from Anchorage 2020.

- The population projection that 2020 is based on came from ISER, a local think-tank. They looked at historical growth for Anchorage from 1950-2000. We have had a very consistent growth of about 45,000 – 50,000 new residents per decade.
- They made a baseline projection (consistent with previous years) and other alternative projections based on different levels of economic activity. There was a high and low projection; the baseline was in the middle.
- They did another study in 2005 that anticipates a slower rate of growth.
- We took that projection and allocated it between Chugiak-Eagle River (which got the largest share of the growth allocation), Girdwood/Turnagain Arm, and the Anchorage Bowl.
- Within the Bowl, there are five subareas with different average household size. The Northwest subarea (Downtown and Midtown) has the lowest average household size (more single people), and the Hillside has the highest average household size (more

families). Because the Hillside has a higher average household size, the number of household units allocated to the Hillside is lower (fewer units resulting in the same number of people).

- We evaluated four growth scenarios for the Anchorage Bowl, and did a suitability analysis based on those. We discovered that Anchorage has a limited land supply, so that even if we develop all remaining vacant or undeveloped land, we still will not have enough housing for the number of people expected to be living here in the future. We have to start thinking about redevelopment and infill, which is mainly going to occur Downtown and in Midtown. The four growth scenarios are:
 - Existing trends
 - Neighborhoods (growth and development is concentrated around commercial nodes serving residential neighborhoods, distributed throughout the city)
 - Urban (concentrates growth and development in Downtown and Midtown; dependent on a high level of regulation and high levels of public transportation use)
 - Satellites (growth would be pushed out to the Mat-Su Borough, which would result in economic disinvestment in Anchorage)
- 2020 is based on a combination of the Neighborhood and Urban scenarios. Growth is expected to be primarily infill and redevelopment, with the goals of reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled and increase public transit use. Neighborhoods around the city would benefit from local-serving commercial.
- The big differences are **not** in the Hillside; the Hillside is a fairly homogenous single-family residential area.
- The 2005 vacant land map with suitability analysis shows that most of the suitable redevelop-able property is not in the Hillside. A lot of it is the mobile home parks that will be redeveloped (legally, they are considered personal property, not real property). So the real challenge for the Municipality is how to provide more housing for people in the Northwest sector of the city (Downtown & Midtown).

Discussion

- So the current estimated population project is 50,000 lower than 2020 predicts?
 - Yes, basically it just means we have more time. In planning, we have to plan for infrastructure so that when growth comes we can handle it. So much of our growth is dependent on factors we can't control as a Municipal government. More and more it's not because of outsiders moving here – it's because our kids are growing up and staying here. It's a sign that Anchorage is maturing as a city.
- As planners, must you/we continually plan for growth? Is it ever viable to cut it off at some point, to decide that we will grow to some number, and then that's it.
 - Determining the carrying capacity of the city somewhat depends on physical constraints, but mainly depends upon the aspirations of the community, and these change over time. In 20-30 years, the aspirations of Anchorage could be the same as they are today or they could be very different. Right now, the issue for us is to plan for the next 20 years.
- So it is incumbent on us that the Hillside District Plan reflects the aspirations of the Hillside residents...

- Yes, but you also have to acknowledge the Anchorage Bowl. Hillside does not exist in isolation to the Bowl – what you do here affects the rest of Anchorage and vice versa. What is the best way to reasonably accommodate growth? If you cap the Hillside, that affects the rest of the Bowl. Vacant land is one factor to look at, but there are others as well. Not everyone wants the same kind of housing, either. Many Anchorage residents want something other than the traditional large-lot, single-family dwelling, but for those that do want that type of housing, the Hillside is the primary part of Anchorage where that can happen.
- What is the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant?
 - (Tom N.) I don't know, but I believe they have plans to accommodate the growth that will occur. Their capital improvements program is not about expansion right now; it's focused on replacing old lines and updating existing facilities. The big issue for the treatment plant is avoiding secondary treatment by maintaining the primary treatment waiver.
- Some people are upset that “you're forcing all this growth on us.” But the market is driving the role of development, not 2020.
 - To do the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan, we needed what we call a “planning horizon” – an arbitrary date that we're planning to. For Anchorage 2020, that was 20 years. It helps to give us parameters to get an idea of what kind of growth we will need to provide infrastructure for, when that will need to come on line, and figure out the most cost-effective way to provide that infrastructure and needed services to the city.
- I wonder if we created this problem by not having this background information be more prominent in the Hillside planning process.
 - We tried to do that in the Framework Plan
 - We probably should have given this presentation in the first workshops. We assumed a memory of the 2020 Plan and process that simply isn't there.
- In the Framework Plan, I'm missing the place where it says you did the suitability analysis – the suitability part doesn't come through in the document; that's very important.
- How do you de-couple the number of housing units from 2020? That's what gets people, that “2020 says it will be 4,000 – 6,000 new units.” These people have not had this background presentation.
- Maybe we need to emphasize this more in the document, but growth is going to be dependent on population and employment.
- Although, the recommendations in the Hillside District Plan will change the market, make it cheaper to develop or redevelop on the Hillside, speeding up development here.

Chris B. gave an overview of the Workshop agenda and walked the group through the PowerPoint presentation for feedback.

Discussion

- I suggest asking people in the breakout groups why they're there.

- Good idea, although we want to be careful about making sure that everyone has a chance to speak. Sometimes a particularly talkative person will get the floor and de-rail the session.
- The point of doing all this is to make daily life easier for ourselves, improving quality of life. We're trying to grow a city that meets everyone's needs.
- We've heard uniformly that everyone is against commercial development on the Hillside and then the MOA Planning Department wants it in there. What do I tell people who ask me "Why does this issue still keep coming up?!"
 - Planners don't want a Qwik-stop any more than the residents do.
 - The idea of having commercial on the Hillside is a matter of providing a convenience for Hillsiders, to reduce vehicle miles traveled, be a more environmentally-responsible city and conserve energy, ease congestion.
 - If there is to be any commercial on the Hillside, there must be strict parameters on the design of the building and what kind of commercial activity goes on there.
- Yes, but in the Framework Plan, the idea of a commercial use on the Hillside is also described as "a gathering place" which to me says it generates trips, doesn't reduce them. Overwhelmingly, people don't want commercial; so at what point do I either tell people they're being listened to and there will be no commercial or that the planners have decided that the plan is going to override them and impose commercial on us?
 - The Plan is **not** going to go against public sentiment. But we still need to have the discussion. We need to consider it, whether or not it actually happens.
- If you stand up in a public forum and say that each Hillside household generates 10-12 trips in a day, you're going to lose all credibility. You used that statistic earlier, but it seems completely unrealistic to all of us.
 - And most kids are not driving on the Hillside because of the cost of gas and insurance...
- Perhaps the answer to people who want to know why we're considering commercial is that the Framework Plan (which is actually not the correct title of the document – it's actually a framework of alternatives for public discussion, but we've all gotten into the habit of calling it the Framework Plan), is **not** the document that goes to the Assembly; it is **only** for public discussion.
- Chris B. explained what is meant by "built/green" infrastructure on one of the slides.
- Dan [Roth], do any of the "challenged" areas present a public health hazard?
 - Not aware of any water wells over 10 mg/L (or ppm) nitrates
 - So areas where problems have occurred have been fixed, but ...
 - Why are we making the inference that there is a problem in these 27 subdivisions?
- I understand challenges installing septic systems; I don't understand the implication that ongoing maintenance problems present a threat to public health and safety.
 - They are probably on holding tanks, which are not considered a long-term solution by the MOA.
- Some areas might be more expensive, but could still have onsite.
 - The document doesn't read that way.

- Compare and contrast costs of alternatives for hypothetical subdivisions with a range of characteristics; that will get the type of information across without potentially devaluing lots on these Hillside subdivisions.
 - I can kind of see that perspective, but not everyone is going to think that way. Many of them will probably focus on the cost of these different alternatives, which is what I see when I look at this table.

Things to Anticipate at the workshops

- Having a separate drainage service area is a royal waste of money
- No new taxes – some will think you’re trying to raise our taxes
 - For the 40% not in service areas yes, it will mean paying taxes they don’t currently pay, but for the 60% that are in services areas, taxes might even go down
 - Drainage is a big problem only in some areas of the Hillside, so taxes could go up for everyone. We need to argue that drainage will [potentially] be a bigger problem than it has been in the past.
 - People will get saturated with new taxes pretty quick.
- There are a couple of tables in the back of the document that lay out the financing mechanism options; it’s important to remind people that not everything is happening in Year 1.
- Chris B needs to work on the Funding & Management slides.
- Groundwater idea: there is some incongruity in AWWU’s service area; there is a limitation on water but not on sewer. AWWU has the authorization from RCA to provide sewage for the total area of Anchorage. The Hillside District Plan limited that with the Recommended Maximum Perimeter of Public Sewerage by talking about moving that boundary. AWWU is against neighborhood onsite systems and will drop any neighborhood that attempts to install them. The Recommended Maximum Perimeter of Public Sewerage should be the same as the area served with public water and no further. That would solve the issue of whose responsibility it is to provide wastewater services.
 - Water and wastewater are two completely separate services. If they de-certified, it could have long-term ramifications if there is some failure [of the neighborhood or individual onsite systems]. Basically, AWWU sewer service is a fallback. The RCA is the State agency that gives authorization, but the Assembly also has to approve sewer service extension. There needs to be some fallback position in case something goes wrong. If you de-certify, there is no fallback. AWWU is quasi-independent and has a different management approach since it was re-organized.
- What if we want a choice about our fallback – e.g., AWWU or some private company?
 - You could do that, but AWWU is subsidized by a larger rate-payer base, so private companies probably couldn’t compete for identical services.
- But cluster systems – AWWU does not have the expertise with neighborhood systems. So we’re stuck with sewers if they are not a viable option and density increases?

- Cluster systems might be an option, but holding tanks are maybe not a good long-term solution because they get expensive
- Maybe not: \$400 - \$500 per month to pump a holding tank might be comparable to \$20,000 - \$25,000 for an alternative wastewater system.
- There is no obvious institutional solution for dealing with neighborhood onsite systems.
 - Yes there is – ADEC!
 - They don't want to take that on.

4. Preparation for the Workshops – CAC and consultant roles

- Staffing for Breakout Sessions

Breakout Sessions	Wednesday	Thursday
Land Use	Chris H.	John W., Cheri F.
Drainage	Dave L.	Dave L. , John R.
Transportation	Dee	Lori
Water & Wastewater	John R, Wayne	Wayne

5. Wrap-up (5 min)

- Assignments