



Clark County council moves to hire new consultant

Madore made contact with firm before vote on growth plan alternative



(http://www.columbian.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/madore_mielke_stewart25-1024x658.jpg)

By **Katie Gillespie** (</author/katiegillespie>), Columbian County Government Reporter

Published: December 2, 2015, 6:57 PM

As early as two weeks ago, before the Clark County council adopted the preferred alternative to its 20-year growth plan, Councilor David Madore already was looking for a new consultant to do the environmental review.



Emails obtained through a public records request show the Republican councilor communicating late last month with Robert W. Thorpe, president of planning firm R.W. Thorpe and Associates, about developing a final environmental impact statement for Clark County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update.

"Thank you for the phone call," Thorpe wrote in an email to Madore at 12:41 p.m. Nov. 24, when the council was still deliberating its preferred alternative. "We would welcome opportunity to provide proposal for completing FEIA [sic]."

A few hours later, the council, by a vote of 2 to 1 with Councilor Jeanne Stewart dissenting, would adopt a preferred alternative including Madore's controversial Alternative 4, as well as a slew of new county growth plan policies, including one allowing the board to select an alternative consultant to complete the environmental impact statement.

On Tuesday, the county council took the first step toward implementing that policy.

Midway through a council meeting that lasted until 11 p.m., Madore proposed a purchasing agreement not to exceed \$5,000 with the Mercer Island-based consulting firm, which would cover the cost for firm representatives to travel to Vancouver this week and pitch to staff and the council what they could offer for the final environmental review.

That purchasing agreement was not listed on the county council's website, The Grid, prior to the meeting, nor was it reflected in the county meeting agenda until about 4 p.m. Monday.

"How can it be that I'm just getting this kind of a document tonight?" a frustrated Stewart asked at Tuesday's meeting. It had just been requested the day prior, county legal staff explained.

The council voted 2 to 1, with Stewart dissenting, to approve the trip with the understanding that the board might take further action at its Wednesday board time. A memorandum of understanding submitted by R.W. Thorpe and Associates estimated the trip, which included travel and staff time, would cost between \$2,595 and \$4,060.

But further efforts to officially hire R.W. Thorpe and Associates were stalled Wednesday, when the Clark County Council was forced to cancel its weekly board time meeting due to lack of proper notice.

The Open Public Meetings Act requires that governing bodies post meeting agendas for regular meetings at least 24 hours in advance. The board time agenda, which included a presentation from the firm, was posted shortly after 8 a.m. Wednesday, less than six hours in advance of the meeting.

Representatives from the firm, who could not be reached for comment Wednesday, were still in Vancouver, however. They met with county planning staff, legal staff, Acting County Manager Mark McCauley and Madore, said deputy planning director Gordy Euler.

"I think we shared our concerns," Euler said Wednesday.

Euler said it's unclear how much it may cost the county to hire R.W. Thorpe and Associates. In the Nov. 24 email Thorpe sent to Madore, Thorpe said the final environmental statement could be completed as soon as Dec. 24.

Environmental Science Associates, which Clark County is currently contracted with to develop the environmental impact statement on the growth plan update, paints a very different picture of what's next for the environmental review. ESA completed the draft environmental review for the growth plan. The draft review indicates Madore's Alternative 4, which allows for smaller parcel sizes for rural, agriculture and forest lots in unincorporated Clark County, has the greatest environmental impacts of any of the four proposed alternatives.

In an estimate the Seattle firm sent to Clark County planning staff Tuesday, ESA recommended a complete redo of the draft environmental impact statement, analyzing all four new alternatives using the new planning policies the board adopted last month. Euler said planning staff agree that starting over would be the correct course.

That would take an additional 300 hours of staff time and \$37,500 in expenses on top of the county's existing \$141,000 contract with ESA, according to the estimate. It would likely be completed next spring.

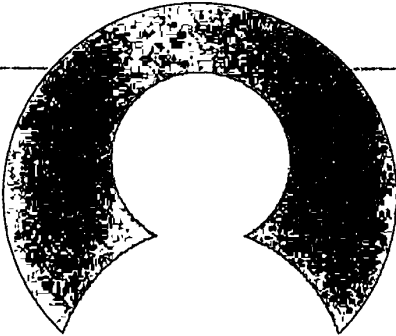
The council could at a later meeting contract with R.W. Thorpe and Associates to develop the final environmental impact statement without sending it back through a public process. There are three more county council public hearings and two more board times before the Christmas holiday — and before the two new councilors are sworn in on Dec. 29. Doing so without putting a contract out to bid, however, would violate an internal county policy.

State law requires only that contracts go through a bidding process if they are for telecommunications or IT services; but internal county policy is to go out for bid for contracts estimated to be at least \$25,000. The council could vote to waive that policy.

"It's not the thing that we like to do, but there are circumstances that kind of dictate it," county purchasing manager Mike Westerman said.

Madore introduced his Alternative 4 earlier this year, and he has since followed up with a new version of the land-use plan and new planning assumptions and county policies. His work has been lauded by a group of rural property owners who say their property rights were stolen from them with the adoption of Washington's Growth Management Act in 1992, and criticized by local land-use attorneys, farmers and city officials.

The county aims to have its plan completed sometime in April in order to meet the state Department of Commerce's June 30 deadline.



Katie Gillespie (/author/katiegillespie)

Columbian County Government Reporter

☎ 360-735-4517

👤 [@newsladykatie \(https://twitter.com/newsladykatie\)](https://twitter.com/newsladykatie)

✉ [Send an Email \(mailto:kaitlin.gillespie@columbian.com\)](mailto:kaitlin.gillespie@columbian.com)

10 Comments

Sort by Newest



Add a comment...



Michele Wollert

RW Thorpe and Associates have been around the expert circuit a time or two and are not naive. Which brings me to my second point: It is hard to imagine that these experienced consultants would enter into an agreement with ONE councilor without wondering why this lone wolf is acting on his own. I'd run far away from any contract with Clark County because the pain is not worth any money made. It's not hard to do their own research on his controversial history.

Maybe the Community Planning staff members were able to give Thorpe the ugly scoop (although Madore's presence in the room would have a chilling effect on honesty).

If I were RW Thorpe, I'd give this "opportunity" a respectful "no thanks." The ONLY reason Madore wants to hire a different consultant is because he and Clark County Citizens United were appropriately prevented from interfering with the first company, ESA, and its objective work.

So, this is another Madore shopping trip to hire someone who will tow his quirky, self-interested line. He is used to finding such persons in private business, I imagine, but has no apparent clue about the ethical quicksand it presents when doing the people's business of government.

Reply 4 mins Edited



John M. Kowalski · Camas, Washington

WTF????

"Madore proposed a purchasing agreement not to exceed \$5,000 with the Mercer Island-based consulting firm, which would cover the cost for firm representatives to travel to Vancouver this week and pitch to staff and the council what they could offer for the final environmental review."

Let me get this straight: M&M are *PAYING* a consulting firm to come to Vancouver and pitch to the staff and council what they could offer? To *sell* them something?

And for \$5K? My week long intercontinental business trips cost \$4K. And almost half that is plane fare.

Reply · 2 · 2 hrs



Jim Moeller · Clark College -- Vancouver, Washington

In 1992 the state authorized the Growth Management Act (GMA). Those that had sunk their lives (and their treasure) into their land had nothing. For example, if the couple had three kids, but only 25 acres and the minimum was 10 acres - well, you can see the problem. Many were caught in the regulations and they have fought the GMA (over 20 years) ever since. There are ways that can be settled but every attempt at compromise has been killed either in the House or the Senate. It's time for new leadership.

Reply · 1 · 9 hrs



Bob Koreis

Spoken like someone running for state office.

Reply · 19 mins



John Laird · Works at Retired Journalist

So are we ready yet for the full implementation of that new charter? Or are we content to let David Madore and Tom Mielke by themselves make critical decisions for a community of 400-plus people?

Reply · 5 · 9 hrs



Lynn Carman · Felida, Washington

Please pass me the popcorn, the plot thickens!! Clark County 'Done Deals!!' Come on January 1!!

Reply · 4 · 9 hrs



Christopher Gudger-Raines · Ridgefield, Washington

I'm guessing that Thorpe will give Madore a more favorable result than the ESA folks gave.

Reply · 4 · 10 hrs



Lorretta Thomas

How can a county-wide growth plan alternative be adopted BEFORE completing, no less reviewing,

an environmental review?

Reply ·  6 · 11 hrs



Stuart L. Riley · Vancouver, Washington

Because Madore.

Reply ·  5 · 10 hrs



Bridget Schwarz · Ridgefield, Washington

Katie, please stop repeating CCCU false claims. Alternative 4/5/whatever is supported only by SOME rural land owners.

Reply ·  4 · 10 hrs · Edited



Thom Rasmussen · Salmon Creek, Washington

Man, that's what I call "transparency". Everything he does is as clear as mud!

Reply ·  4 · 11 hrs



Christine Blackford

This is more that ego-I am not clear, tho, on his agenda. What is the money connection? Who else will benefit by Dave getting his way with things?

Reply ·  3 · 11 hrs



Thom Rasmussen · Salmon Creek, Washington

He needs a platform to be able to run for his next conquest. He has to have something to show for his time here before he can jump to a higher office. It's all "look at me, see what I did".

[Community guidelines \(/guidelines/\)](#)

BLOGS (HTTP://BLOGS.COLUMBIAN.COM)

