



CP16#0603

Ronald Onslow, Mayor
Sandra Day, Councilmember
John Main, Councilmember
Donald Stose, Councilmember
David Taylor, Councilmember
Lee Wells, Councilmember
Darren Wertz, Councilmember

April 1, 2015

Mark McCauley
County Manager
Public Service Center
1300 Franklin Street, 6th Floor
Vancouver, WA 98660

Mr. McCauley:

The City of Ridgefield is writing to you today, asking for your help to assure your Executive planning staff presents a community supported, defensible Comprehensive Growth Management Plan to the County's planning commission and County Council, as required under Clark County Home Rule Charter Section 3.2(B)(5). We certainly understand the large and complex nature of this undertaking. We also understand that the process is far from over, with an expected completion date sometime in the late Spring of 2016. However, as of the writing of this letter, the City of Ridgefield and other local partners are concerned that the Comprehensive Plan update will not meet either timelines or substantive requirements, due to potential lapses in public participation, lack of oversight and preparation by the County's professional staff, and a lack of adequate coordination with Cities and other public partners. We believe there is a path forward that addresses these concerns, but for 2016 adoption, time is short.

To be clear, the concerns identified above are not of our creation, but are clear requirements of the State's Growth Management Act. The Growth Management Act (G.M.A.) governs the development of Comprehensive Plans in the State of Washington. Of the various sections of G.M.A. the most concerning to the City at this time are the various provisions throughout the legislation that require early and continuous public participation in the planning process. Specifically G.M.A Planning Goals seek public involvement:

36.70A.020(11) Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

Additionally, the G.M.A. requires that Counties and Cities coordinate Comprehensive Planning efforts:

RCW 36.70A.100 The comprehensive plan of each county or city that is adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040 shall be coordinated with, and consistent with, the comprehensive plans adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040 of other counties or cities with which the county or city has, in part, common borders or related regional issues.

The G.M.A. also requires a public participation plan that allows for the public to view and comment on various aspects of different proposals:

RCW 36.70A.140 Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW ~~36.70A.040~~ shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. The procedures shall provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments.

The City appreciates the Open House held by County staff on March 25, 2015 that allowed residents of our community and those in the surrounding areas an opportunity to view the growth plan alternatives, one of which, Alternative 4, was only first publicly released on March 20, 2015. The people attending also had an opportunity to speak with County staff and verify details and specifics of the alternatives, with the notable exception of Alternative 4, which was not developed or reviewed by County planning or legal staff.

Because our citizens were told at the Ridgefield Open House that these were the alternatives being considered by the County Council, we were stunned to learn that less than 24 hours after the Ridgefield Open House, the Alternative 4 presented by a County Councilor had already been significantly modified – rendering the comments and concerns of our citizens, as well as City concerns, irrelevant. Further, the modifications to Alternative 4 appear to have significantly increased the impacts for areas surrounding Ridgefield. We realize the modified maps were placed in the public domain in error. However, should those maps reappear in an official forum prior to, or at, the scheduled April 14 Board of County Councilors hearing, we would expect a new round of open houses and a full public involvement schedule with the detail to allow an objective analysis of the modified proposal by any interested party. To do otherwise would be to prevent the City and the citizens of Ridgefield from a meaningful opportunity to comment and engage in open discussion and consideration of the proposed plan and to thwart effective participation in this instance.

We have great respect for the professionalism of you and your staff. We have appreciated working with the County on this Comprehensive Plan update, and are committed to the partnership between the City and County. That is why we speak up now, as your partner, to ask that you stop this moving target of Alternative 4 that is being prepared by Council instead of appropriately through qualified County planners. It ignores the intent of RCW 36.70A.100 and 36.70A. 140, and, most importantly, it violates our mutually shared desire to coordinate and work cooperatively with each other and our citizens.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We are open to discussing them at an appropriate time.

Sincerely,



Steve Stuart

City Manager

City of Ridgefield

C: Oliver Orjiako, Director of Community Planning