

Greater Maple Valley Area Council
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December 30, 2011

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Subject: GMVUAC Comments on Implementation of King County Plan to Establish Community Service Areas in Unincorporated King County

Reference: King County Ordinance 17139 Framework for Public Engagement in Unincorporated Areas

The Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council (GMVUAC) has reviewed King County Ordinance 17139 and is pleased to submit comments regarding its content and implementation plan.

We understand the Ordinance is the framework and process details are yet to be determined. With several decades in supporting our rural unincorporated Maple Valley population, the GMVUAC has vast experience in what works and what does not work. Our comments focus on what we feel will improve the chances of success in the implementation of Community Service Areas (CSAs).

We applaud the effort of King County to reach out to those in the unincorporated urban and rural areas currently under-represented and we support forming CSAs therein. Areas such as Carnation/Duvall, Fall City/Preston, Green Valley/Unincorporated Black Diamond, as well as the unincorporated urban areas seem logical candidates for CSAs. We believe there is sufficient consensus between the UACs and the county to establish initial boundaries without additional UAC input followed by feedback from the UACs.

However, key to the above point, is that currently operating UACs remain functioning in the same manner, under the same name and have no boundary changes without their input and consent. In addition, unincorporated residents seeking to form new UACs can be assured of support from King County.

The Ordinance states a single staff contact from county government will be appointed by the county to support residents in each CSA. The degree of support given the GMVUAC by our current focal has been immeasurable. We would like to keep this level of expertise and experience. We strongly request our current county contact continues to support us. If current focals remain with existing UACs, we recommend King County appoint additional staff to promote and support the new CSAs, especially those without an existing UAC.

We are very pleased the County Executive will host public meetings in each unincorporated CSA at least once each calendar year, in collaboration with the elected King County councilmember for that area and that this event will be broadly advertised. Also, we are eager to participate in the regular opportunities for community-based organizations and residents to meet with King County elected officials and senior management. UAC members with long histories in UAC business reminisce about a direct working relationship with county leadership and point to the fact that things work much better when the interplay between county leadership and area council functions--and functions well.

To better understand how the process might work, we request a definition of "interbranch", "interbranch team", and "interbranch work program."

Several issues arise around the requirement in Para. D of the Ordinance to "Annually develop, in collaboration with each community, an interbranch work program for each community service area, including a plan for public meetings for the year, and status report on the previous year's work programs and any significant issues affecting the community service areas for transmittal to the council;..."

Implementation of the work statement concept is the potential weak link in this new structure and needs very careful attention. The Ordinance suggests determination of work projects is done by the county in collaboration with community organizations. Historically, and currently, priorities for what needs attention and how to solve issues have been set by the UACs, usually at the request of local residents. Who will prevail if the priorities of the county are different from those of the UACs? We strongly suggest each CSA or UAC determine their own priorities for work projects. The GMVUAC has done this effectively for the past 20 years with direct input from our constituents through our Citizen Surveys that we

have consistently collected. We do not believe we should have our tasks determined for us and action items assigned. We are all volunteers. Many people work full time. There is great concern regarding the possibility of a top-down assignment of work statement.

Rural inhabitants share sometimes funny, sometimes tragic stories of urban county officials being put in charge of rural issues about which they know little or nothing. In some cases, studies have been done that later prove irrelevant. In other cases, due to lack of knowledge or experience, rural residents have been unfairly penalized or harmed. The county could squander any potential goodwill by failing to appoint focal points who understand and respect rural values and who can provide constructive solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns and to make suggestions. The GMVUAC is willing and able to help King County promote and establish the new CSAs. Please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

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