

# GMVUAC April 3, 2017

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Called to order – 7:00 pm**

**Members Present:**

Steve Hiester	Peter Rimbo
Sue Neuner	Susan Harvey
Adam Sterling	Linda Harer
Hank Haynes	Stephen Deutschman

**Members Absent:**

Warren Iverson (proxy to Stephen)  
Lorraine Blacklock (proxy to Linda)  
Rhys Sterling (proxy to Adam)

**Agenda:**

Steve: Move minutes to closed council meeting at the end.

Hank moved to approve amended agenda, Peter seconded.

**Motion passed**

**February & March Meeting Minutes:**

*(Approved in closed council meeting.)*

**Public Comment Period: - 7:05 pm**

Lonnie (?): Was reading the Covington Reporter, it has a section called community news/ notes, told them about GMVUAC, asked whether news about GMVUAC could be put in paper if someone sends them info.

Peter: Have been sending them news articles every month for last 8 years. Depends on when they publish.

Susan: They don't always print everything.

Peter: GMVUAC news is also in the Voice of the Valley, thank you for bringing it up.

Lonnie (?): It would be nice to know who the speakers are, don't get the Voice, but it was on the news this time.

Peter: Information about speakers is also on our website.

Lisa Chase: Any news about the proposed marijuana processing plant on 200th Ave.?

Peter: Nothing other than what Mark sends me, keep hearing should be approved in 2 weeks.

Lisa Chase: Feel as though they are stalling for something.

Peter: DPER must be asking for more info, applicant should not be stalling.

Lisa Chase: Info I read doesn't point out what the delay is.

Peter: could just call Nancy and ask what is happening.

Lisa Chase: Tried that but she wouldn't meet with Nell, just said not going to meet at this time.

Peter: Could be waiting until permit is issued, we have no other info.

Susan: Any tracking on the permit number?

Peter: No permit number because it is not issued yet.

Mike Chase: It's been delayed for 4 years, have not addressed anything.

Peter: It's just a matter of when they issue the permit.

### **Guest Speaker:**

Bob Burns, King County Land Conservation

Bob: I'm with King County (KC) Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP). I brought a 20-minute slide deck, plenty of time for questions at the end. Please ask me anything else after that.

County has an initiative called land conservation to finish job of obtaining lands, done lots of work protecting farmland, river corridors, etc., missing links between parcels that we want to finish protecting. Established advisory group with representatives from cities, non-profits, etc.

We live in an incredible place, we are growing and growth is projected to continue, so we need to protect places to live while striking a balance with the land. Many benefits to land conservation, it preserves biodiversity, we want to have connected corridors, it combats global warming, and there are health benefits to having open spaces. Having a protected environment keeps the quality of life high and makes the region more competitive, better place to live. We've had conservation success in the past, most of it is federal/state lands on eastern half of Washington, but a lot more to do. Lots of success recently, but need better Puget Sound water quality, storm-water runoff, lots more work to do on salmon habitat recovery, floods are a problem with storm intensity projected to increase, trail networks are not all connected, trail system becomes stronger when they are connected which is our eventual goal, and we are losing forest/farm economies and associated jobs.

Lands are broken into 5 categories: natural lands, forests, farms, trail networks, and river corridors, with a subset of urban river corridors. There are also near-shore opportunities in Puget Sound for enhancement. This is not a complete

vision, also want to work with cities to identify what lands need to be protected, trails/rivers/etc., and community gardens inside cities. Rather than ask cities to fit those into the 5 categories, we established a separate urban green space category. There's also an equity filter, portions of society do not have access to public green space, looking at that in conjunction with health disparities, as well as language/income/ethnicity to find places in county with disparity in access to green spaces. We've taken these 5 categories and categorized how each category benefits the people/environment/economy, everything from water quality to recreation opportunities, etc. We want to continue thinking about them in this manner, because what is the reason if there is no benefit.

Susan: Under trails, ecological function is gray. Is that because there is a low benefit?

Bob: Gray means low benefit, half is medium, filled is great. Trails are not necessarily helping wildlife, but might help air quality as it encourages people to walk and bike. Trails have greater impact on economy, less on environment. Each category has certain strengths, in aggregate there is a strong range of benefits across categories.

Mike Chase: Cannot bow hunt anymore in Enumclaw, lands were bought up by counties, why is that?

Bob: There are limited hunting opportunities on county land, many lands allow passive activities such as hiking. We look at how best to balance different user groups, such as biking and horseback riding.

Mike Chase: Almost all county lands say "no hunting."

Bob: We can get you in touch with you regarding what's allowed where.

Hank: Is this related to weapon use on property? Ammunition being shot into nearby homes, etc.

Mike Chase: Certain weapons can be used in firearm-restricted areas.

Steve: There are restrictions on what types of firearms can be used in rural areas.

Bob: Will follow up with you after the meeting.

Why land conservation now? The longer we wait the more expensive it becomes, because costs are growing faster than revenue streams. Population is growing and we will lose a lot of land, not going to buy everything, but just want to finish up connecting corridors. If we don't act we will lose important ecological lands. With climate change and uncertainty around the future, trees here store carbon better than anywhere else, so protecting them will mitigate impacts.

Peter: Have you identified the key lands to get, priced out what you will pay?

Bob: Good segue. This slide shows the parcels/acreage we are wanting to get over the next few years. Lands are split up under those 5 categories, the 2 columns are so that properties are not double counted as 1 parcel might have river/trail/etc. benefits. First number is parcels, second is acres, then fee vs. easement percentage, which means how much does the county want to buy the whole property and all rights, whereas conservation easement is purchasing just development rights. Farm/forest lands are mostly easements not wanting to

develop, much better off in hands of private land owners. Fees are where we want to build something, such as trails/levees/etc., better to own in fee.

Steve: Any thoughts on flood control?

Bob: Third column is rivers, protecting communities from floods. Bottom is grand total, 5,500 parcels, 66,000 acres, total cost would be \$1.5-1.8 billion. This is a 30-year vision, will not be doing this overnight. Costs includes transaction, operations, and maintenance over 30 years, etc.

Peter: River column looks to be a low-hanging fruit, only a handful of acres but need to buy it all, is there a prioritization?

Bob: River corridor is only 250 acres, but spread over 150 parcels, so there are many transactions. Forest lands has bigger acreage per parcel/transaction. Each year we are thinking about which are the most important to protect, asking which is under the highest threat to being lost to development activity and prioritize each year, but it is an imperfect science.

Susan: Is any of that land privately owned? Private owners can develop, rezone, etc. Liable to lose all that acreage in 30 years if you don't move fast. Will have to make priorities clear to KC council, but might not all be on the same page?

Bob: All of it is private. We have submitted plans and are doing a lot of community engagement. Through this effort we are hoping to work with citizens, cities, and businesses, then bring everything back to the council.

Steve: Which rivers are in this plan?

Bob: Cedar River, Snoqualmie, as well as parcels in farmland along river as the best farmland is along river valleys. None of this is land inside cities.

Hank: Does KC control Elliott Bay and the Duwamish, or does Seattle?

Bob: State owns waterways, going through incorporated areas as it reaches the Sound, working closely w/ Kent, Tukwila, and Seattle to understand how to better address rivers. There are equity issues as folks rely on rivers for food, and there are cleanup opportunities. We want to create more opportunities for people to use and interface with rivers as open spaces.

Hank: Those areas had a lot of sewage at one point, sea life is not happy, how do you clean it up and preserve the salmon?

Peter: Everything here is in unincorporated area (UA), so the county controls all the zoning. More worried more about cities rezoning.

Bob: We have met with 34 of 39 cities, currently working to figure out what lands of those cities are high value conservative. We hope to have similar table for cities soon.

Peter: Cities here have messed up lands already, exceeding growth targets, allowing development like crazy.

Steve: This plan has a regional benefit, but is KC bearing most of the cost?

Bob: Next slide is about money, everything would cost \$1.5-1.8 billion, we already have 3/4 of the necessary funds, current revenue streams in first half are dedicated to county/land conservation, numbers are from 30 years of that revenue stream. Conservation futures tax is a property tax by law, can only be used for land

conservation, and over the next 30 years it would raise \$160 million. Revenue sources are arranged in order of highest to lowest certainty moving clockwise around the wheel. Would not be on the slide if completely unreliable, but some are less certain. We are usually successful going after grants, such as salmon recovery funding grants, but certain pots might dry up. The parks levy is just the portion for new land conservation, typically approved over 6 years, so it would need to be renewed 5 times, the last levy was supported at 70%, but no guarantee it will continue over 30 years.

Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) has bonding capacity, up to half of the revenue can be bonded against, other half available for grants to city/counties, borrowing against future revenue stream, at 40 percentile now, there is a 50 percent debt ceiling as debt goes down.

The last pie wedge is the gap that will need to be filled with new funding, the shortfall is \$383 million, using midpoint of \$1.5-1.8 billion to establish total, but it will go up once city lands are added, we hope to have a similar graph for city lands.

Peter: These are today's dollars but prices will go up, how do you cover that?

Bob: On the next slide, looking at the orange line, we will lose opportunities and the cost of land will grow higher than revenue, so in the latter part of the next 30 years our dollars will not be as effective. If we increase new funds over the years, it should fall along the black line and get there in 30 years and fill the gap. The best way is the accelerated line, borrow against future revenues to purchase lands now while cheaper, should be able to finish sooner.

Hank: Not too much more expensive than a new football stadium. Do you have the manpower to move at the same speed as building a stadium if there is an availability of funds?

Bob: We have the staff, but the trick is finding landowners willing to sell. Would not all happen in the first year, but instead of 3% a year over 30 years, can do half in the first 10 years by accelerating.

Peter: How do you borrow against these revenue streams?

Bob: Most cannot be borrowed against, but conservation futures are very reliable, would be primary source of borrowing, can borrow against some of the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET), but more difficult to predict over each individual year.

Peter: Future bonding capacity is already in the graph, so would this be double counting?

Bob: We would be bonding \$120 million coupled with slower revenues.

Hank: What about carbon tax revenue?

Bob: Those did not pass.

Steve: The parks levy would need to be passed 5 more times? How reliable is it?

Bob: Yes, \$210 million is assuming the same levy is passed again, only factored in today's dollars. First was a 4-year levy passed at 56-58% support, the 2007 levy was bigger and in the low 60%, and the 2016 levy was passed at 70% and bigger than first, so there's increasing support.

Susan: Where's the anticipated future philanthropy coming from?

Linda: From Forterra?

Bob: We have met with many agencies, nature conservancy trusts, and many advise us that there are sources and they will work with us. Lunch with the right person might result in that money, but unlikely. Over the next 30 years, the hope is to steer \$50 million into this initiative, some of the philanthropy sources and a fair amount of wealth is in our region, so it's a realistic target. The plan is to work with foundations, but also corporations. Business challenge grants, we might offer some to fill the funding gap for areas that improve their quality of life. The advisory group is looking at possible sources to fill funding gap, such as a bond, property tax levy, increasing the CFT tax, or adding REET 3. Currently there are two types of real estate excise taxes paid by the seller, REET 3 would be paid by the buyer, up to 1% of the transaction. The advisory group wants to keep looking at all four, would need a public vote. The group likes the CFT the most, authorized to go up to the 6.25-cent level, funding source can only be used for conservation so would not be diverting it, and it does not cause suppression. State statutes limit property taxes to 5.90 cents per \$1,000 of land, local park/fire districts might be impacted, but CFT would not suppress any junior taxing district. Also looking at philanthropy, environmental markets/carbon credits, and private investments in farms/timber/etc., looking into the rates of return.

Peter: Who serves on the advisory group?

Bob: 5 business groups, Boeing, REI, non-profit groups, etc. Had a teacher with the Tahoma School District in the first meeting but they had a conflict, going forward we are hoping to replace with another educator.

Linda: The list is online, cities are also included.

Peter: No people from the UA?

Bob: Terry from Bear Creek is on there, and there are several others. Phase 2 is in September, so some people may not be able to move forward. We want to have a number of UA folks, want to have a good mix. Cannot do anything that conflicts with the parks levy.

Last slide shows the next steps. The first report from the advisory group is online, we will continue working with cities through September, then bring back the advisory group in September to meet several times. We hope to get recommendations back by December about what is the recommended funding source, what should be included, etc. will bring together input from other stakeholders, and the council will deliberate early next year.

Susan: Are you working with Maple Valley, Black Diamond, or Oak Point?

Bob: We met with both Maple Valley and Black Diamond once each, working on setting up another meeting, they expressed desire to work with us. Both have lands that might fit under initiative, and we might be able to fit in 1-2 more meetings until September. Talked with Black Diamond about potential protection areas, no definitive list, but good introductory meeting. We will be going back in April/May/June to tighten up the conversation and identify specific parcels/acreage.

Linda: Based on the online map, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe has been playing a key role in preserving KC.

Bob: They were involved in the purchase of a White River tree farm, they are one of many stakeholders, we have received feedback on what they want to protect and there is lots of overlap.

Linda: Are they willing to help in other areas?

Bob: We want to explore that, have had conversations with the Muckleshoot Tribe as well. We will look into revenue partnering opportunities, especially along river parcels.

Steve: Major cities will also benefit from this.

Bob: Not just about lands within cities, but also looking at the combined funding gap.

Stephen: If you're a resident of Maple Valley, will you be paying this property tax?

Bob: Every resident pays regardless of whether they live in urban/rural areas, taxes are the same countywide, depending on size of parcel.

Mike Chase: What efforts have been made to raise revenue by charging people for using the lands? What about discovery passes?

Bob: That is something we are talking about, but it is difficult to collect fees from lots of people using trails over hundreds of miles.

Mike: If they are the ones using it, they should be paying more.

Bob: We are looking at how to raise revenue generally, trails is just one part, but this is mostly about protecting forests/rivers/farmland, no public access to most of these parcels, members of the public cannot use these lands but it is in our quality of life interest to maintain forest/farms. Much higher percentage is not trails.

Susan: Could also charge bike associations.

Hank: When Indian tribes buy non-treaty lands outside the reservation, are they still subject to taxation?

Bob: Not an expert, there are federal laws, they can own land while not bringing it into their reservations.

### **Council Business: -**

Bylaws: Rhys Sterling

Steve: Rhys is not here.

Peter: We will talk about them next month.

Steve: Pay particular attention to the election changes and attendance.

Website Update: Linda Harer

Linda: Had a great meeting with the PR Committee, first meeting in Olympia on this Thursday, kept most of emails between peter, will go to this person starting over with some of the work that we have done, and it will be a lot more simple. One of the goals was to change the format, but that is not necessary, Peter gave me the go ahead to move forward.

Peter: Your developer will help you?

Linda: It is faster and cheaper to get stuff done when you get out of Seattle, I have worked with him for 10 years and never got a complaint.

Susan: Will there be a charge?

Linda: There will be a small charge, but should be able to do it under the radar. I'm excited with help I've been receiving, Stephen has been helping. I will have more next time after our meeting on Thursday.

### **Committee Reports:** -

Economic: Hank Haynes

Hank: I have brought a report regarding the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) economic strategy. (Read report aloud.)

Steve: We have unfinished business with review of that document, are you planning another meeting?

Peter: After the 14th.

Hank: Yes, but I have been having difficulty finding the materials that I created.

Peter: We sent our comments together to Adam and Steve.  
(other discussion)

Peter: After the 14th we can compare drafts, update comments, and have a vote at the next meeting. It will need to be before the beginning of May.

Hank: Might need two meetings.

Growth Management: Peter Rimbo

Peter: Started a task status report last month, will highlight updates each month. There is a Covington Master Planned Development (MPD) meeting next week, not recommending that we look at this again, I am convinced that Covington does not care about traffic and there is no need to make more comments.

Susan: As long as they are not changing zoning.

Peter: Next, Maple Valley passed an ordinance annexing 14 acres between Maple Valley and Black Diamond west of State Route 169. This was expected. As for marijuana operations, like the one that Mike/Lisa Chase are talking about, DPER keeps saying they are within days of approval, it needs a road variance and hookup for stormwater, but it has taken 3 years and the neighbors will sue regardless. Another operation in Hobart with a road variance is also possibly within weeks of being approved, not sure what's taking so long. Applicant on 240th did have delays because they wanted to do changes. Last, told by KC Dept. of Transportation (DOT) on Elk Heights gravel operation across from Quality Aggregates, will put together haul route agreement to determine how to handle 250 trucks per day.

Linda: Lake Francis Road is already starting to be torn apart.

Peter: KC keeps complaining about there's no money to fix roads, but keeps giving permits to trucks.

Susan: Can't they require developers to fix infrastructure?



Peter: Looked at the code, standards said no mitigation required because not impacting intersections to a certain level. They said there will be a haul route agreement, but we'll see.

Susan: Thought it said that if it is approved then costs will go back to company?

Peter: We will wait to see what the agreement looks like. Keep in mind, road fixes are paid for by our taxes and not by the people who are using/destroying the roads.

Linda: We need to rally voices, it's our job to let people know what's going on.

Peter: KC has no power because the gas tax is up to the state. We've already spoken to the state and rallied all UAs in the county.

Linda: Squeaky wheel gets the grease, we need the numbers and need people backing us, should let our constituents know.

Susan: Who is haul route agreement between?

Peter: The county and the company. Very discouraged about state's willingness to address.

Transportation: Susan Harvey

Susan: No update because Warren isn't here, did not see signs on Issaquah-Hobart Road yet. Asked Four Creeks people on participating in the Joint Transportation Initiative (JTI), nice response from their president, Edie. Anyone can join group and participate, but issues are on a case-by-case basis, can participate as individuals. Peter sent info to Reagan Dunn regarding partnership with Issaquah to study traffic on the Issaquah-Hobart Road, need inter-local agreement, proposed motion will go to Council for discussion, so there's some result from the mayor's conference a few months ago. Key issue is membership in the PSRC, and Peter has a letter.

Stephen: Been having a conversation with Mark Gulbranson at the PSRC, emailed him but he's out of town until next week. Because we're not a government agency, he can submit a proposal to have us recognized as a special interest/government group, and not just a protest group. We need to draft a letter so that the PSRC will recognize our presence.

Peter: Problem with the letter is that we're not recognized by the state, not a 501(c)(3) organization.

Steve: We are recognized by Washington as a non-profit organization, used to be recognized under KC but that ended with the charter.

Peter: Susan asked me to draft the letter, it's simply a question to the PSRC regarding membership criteria. (Letter read aloud.)

Stephen: I had this conversation, but was told we are not a special entity and not eligible. Will see what Mark says, but I already discussed this so there's no need to send a letter.

Hank: How does KC see us as a voice?

Peter: We just need the PSRC to tell us how things can be handled under their existing bylaws, Stephen has already put the ball in their court.

Stephen: Mark suggested a face-to-face meeting.

Steve: We will wait for his response then figure out what to do.

Stephen: I will send out an email as soon as he gets back to me.

Environment: Steve Hiester

Steve: I went to the Cedar River Council (CRC) meeting, the main part was about levees in river bend, preliminary plans are to acquire property and divert the river a little.

Linda: They also did one off of Cedar Grove Road.

Steve: They will rework the whole area.

Steve: State legislature is talking about rescinding the cap on property taxes, they're discussing it under the radar, talking about removing the 1% cap, school funding is part of the excuse. Increases will be based on growth/inflation, could go as high as a 5% increase.

Tim Eyman's initiative was ruled unconstitutional, but the state legislature enacted it anyway, so now they can undo it. Today KC Dow Constantine is proposing an increase to sales tax to fund homelessness problems, so we will be taxed for problems outside our area.

**Closed Council Meeting:**

Discussion on minutes, other council business.

Chair adjourned meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned – 9:13 pm**