

County Concerns with Proposed MPDs

By Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, March 1, the Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Our first standing-room-only crowd of 2010 came to wish Major Dave Germani well as he prepares to retire from the King County Sheriff's office and to hear two King County experts discuss their concerns regarding the proposed Master Planned Developments (MPDs) in Black Diamond.

The Area Council swore in and welcomed new member, Bruce Trelstad, representing the Francis Community Area. Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to the King County Council representing all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District.

Fire Department

Larry Rude of Maple Valley Fire & Safety discussed potential Residential Fire Code changes regarding sprinkler systems. The State has voted to adopt International Fire Code Section R313--Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems. These would require new residences to install such systems. The King County Council has until July 1 to vote on adoption of the new code.

Sheriff's Precinct-Level Community Involvement Program

Major Dave Germani, Commander of the Sheriff's Southeast Precinct #3, held his Quarterly Forum to both listen to issues from the public and provide feedback. This was Major Germani's last forum, as he is retiring after 30 years of service with the Sheriff's office.

Major Germani dedicated his last Quarterly Forum to several tragic incidents which recently occurred in the local area. He read several accounts and letters that were both gripping and sad. He asked for people's prayers for the victims and their families and friends.

Long-time member Warren Iverson presented Major Germani a plaque from the Area Council commemorating his many years of service to the community followed by a well-deserved standing ovation. Major Germani thanked the Area Council and all in attendance for helping over the years to renew his faith in people.

Pictures were taken with Major Germani surrounded by six former chairs and the current Chair of the Area Council and finally with the entire Area Council. A wonderful cake was shared by all. *The Area Council thanks Major Germani and wishes him and his family well in the future.*

Master Planned Developments

King County Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) Senior Policy Analyst Paul Reitenbach and King County Department of Transportation Traffic Engineering Section leader Matthew Nolan provided an overview of the proposed MPDs in Black Diamond. They also addressed specific concerns the County shares with the Area Council and many citizens regarding the two proposed MPDs. A total of 4,530 single-family and 1,520 multi-family units have been proposed on nearly 700 acres. Over 1,100,000 sq ft of commercial and office space also has been proposed.

King County has supplied detailed comments to Black Diamond on both the Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEISs) in September 2009 and the Final EISs (FEISs) in February 2010. Those comments covered a wide variety of important issues including: Transportation, Schools, Stormwater, Wastewater, Parks, Trails, Growth Management, Air and Water Quality, Wildlife Habitat, and Historic Preservation.

Mr. Reitenbach, a veteran of nearly all past MPDs in King County, provided a history of those MPDs--their issues and how things worked out. He also described the 1996 Black Diamond Urban Growth Area Agreement (BDUGAA) that set in motion how Black Diamond was to develop. This past December Black Diamond annexed two large Potential Annexation Areas (designated in the BDUGAA) where the MPDs are proposed.

The County believes the proposed MPDs will have significant adverse impacts to adjacent and nearby Rural and Resource lands in unincorporated King County. Mr. Reitenbach stated the intent of both the King County Comprehensive Plan and the Countywide Planning Policies is to ensure urban development is not supported by the Rural Area. Unfortunately, as Mr. Reitenbach cited King County's comments to Black Diamond, that is not the case here. There are three new schools and a large stormwater retention pond proposed to be placed in the Rural Area to directly serve the proposed MPDs within the city.

These also are concerns voiced by the Area Council in letters to King County and Black Diamond leaders and local media.

Area Council members asked what authority and responsibility King County has in these matters should the Black Diamond City Council approve the MPD Applications without drastic changes and mitigations. Mr. Reitenbach stated for anything in the Rural Area the developer, Yarrow Bay in this case, will have to obtain permits from the County. While that was encouraging to hear, some current and former Area Council members voiced their concern that King County has traditionally granted those permits in the past.

Another issue voiced by the audience was growth. Mr. Reitenbach stated the King County Growth Management Planning Council (Oct. 09) provides minimum household growth targets. For the City of Black Diamond the 2006-2031 growth target is 1900 households. Black Diamond is categorized as one of 19 "small cities" which together share a growth target allocation of 10,922 new housing units. Black Diamond's 1,900 is 17% of the total small city allocation!

Matthew Nolan provided an overview of King County's extensive concerns with potential transportation impacts posed by the proposed MPDs. Particularly impacts that could occur to many major King County roads and intersections in southeast King County.

Mr. Nolan described detailed recommendations King County provided Black Diamond to ensure true impacts of the proposed MPDs are indeed identified and analyzed. One of the most important ones was to institute "triggers" in the phases of the plan which would stop development should road capacities be exceeded, which the County strongly believes would be the case. The County worked with Redmond Ridge developers to successfully institute such "triggers."

The Area Council asked about the numbers of internal trips assumed in the MPD proposals, feeling the vast majority of trips actually will be outside the area to both work and shop, thus clogging our transportation infrastructure even more than Yarrow Bay assumes. Mr. Nolan agreed the numbers assumed are overly optimistic. This is especially true as Mr. Reitenbach pointed out that most past MPDs in King County have never come close to reaching their commercial/retail development goals, thus causing far more traffic than originally assumed to travel outside the MPD areas and severely impacting the existing transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Nolan stated that any proposed mitigations for County roads or intersections will require permits for grading, etc., thus giving the County some authority to ensure such mitigations are adequate. He also mentioned another problem must be addressed in that a proposed "urban-to-urban" road through Rural Area wetlands will trigger a thorough review by the Army Corps of Engineers before any permits could be granted. An Appellant from Black Diamond mentioned the WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife submitted a letter earlier in the day to Black Diamond indicating those same requirements.

The Area Council and members of the audience expressed their thanks to Mr. Reitenbach and Mr. Nolan for their professional handling of very difficult questions and for providing an in-depth understanding of key issues important to local area citizens.

The hearing schedule for the proposed MPDs in Black Diamond is as follows:

Appeals Hearings of the FEISs (Open to the public, but no comment taken):

Sat. 3/6, 10 AM - 5 PM (Black Diamond Elementary School at 25314 Baker St.)

Mon. 3/8, 7 - 10 PM (BD City Council Chambers at 25510 Lawson St.)

Tues. 3/9, 7 - 10 PM (BD City Council Chambers at 25510 Lawson St.)

MPD Public Hearings (Public Comment will be taken at the Thurs. & Fri. sessions):

Wed. 3/10, 7 - 10 PM (Black Diamond Elementary School at 25314 Baker St.)

Thurs. 3/11, 7 - 10 PM (BD Elementary School at 25314 Baker St.)

Fri. 3/12, starting at 10 AM (BD City Council Chambers at 25510 Lawson St.)

Interested citizens are advised to check the [City of Black Diamond website](#) for more information.

Next Meeting:

Date/Time -- Monday, April 5, at 7:00 - 9:00 PM.

Location -- Sheriff's Precinct #3 Headquarters, 231st St & SR-169 (across from Fire Station)

Topics/Speakers -- Julia Larson, King County Rural Economic Strategies.