

Surface Water Management Fees

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, February 13, 2017 (delayed one week due to the February 6 snowstorm), the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics included: (1) Surface Water Management Fees; (2) Water Availability and Permitting Study; and (3) Black Diamond Open Space Stewardship Plan.

Public Comment

Adrian Medved of Hobart mentioned proposed State House Bill (HB) 1692 to put Marijuana operations under the category of Agriculture. Ms. Medved was concerned this could preclude residents, who live near such operations, from voicing complaints regarding odors resulting from growing and processing of Marijuana.

Surface Water Management Fees

John Taylor, Assistant Director of the Water & Land Resources Division of the King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks discussed surface water management (SWM) fees.

King County is required to provide SWM services by State and Federal law. The SWM programs address impacts from stormwater runoff such as flooding, erosion, pollution, habitat degradation, and low stream flows.

For over 20 years to pay for these services fees have been assessed on property owners in unincorporated King County. Currently, that fee is ~\$14/mo (\$171.50/yr), which generates ~\$24M/yr to maintain existing facilities and roads; provide support to farmers; conduct habitat restoration and salmon recovery; and meet Federal Clean Water Act compliance.

King County has identified additional challenges that need to be addressed. These include: proactively fix existing facilities before troubles occur (estimated savings over 10 yr is \$128M); increase services to farmers (for agricultural drainage assistance including ditching) and rural property owners; retrofit areas currently without any stormwater controls; and address drainage onto and off of roads.

Starting this month the new residential SWM fee will be ~\$240.44/yr (~40%). For comparison, the Seattle average (it uses a graduated scale, rather than a flat fee) residential rate is \$319/yr.

Water Availability and Permitting Study

Mr. Taylor also discussed the recent Washington State Supreme Court decision in that counties have a responsibility under the Growth Management Act to make determinations of water availability through their Comprehensive Plans and facilitate establishing water adequacy by permit applicants before issuance of development permits.

The Supreme Court ruling will require the County to develop a system for review of water availability, with a particular focus on future development that would use permit exempt wells as their source of potable water. This system will be implemented through amendments to the King County Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

King County will conduct an 18-month Water Availability and Permitting Study to analyze methods to accommodate current zoning given possible water availability issues and will look at innovative ways to accommodate future development in any areas with insufficient water by using mitigation measures (e.g. water banks).

The Area Council will follow the progress of this study and invite County experts to address the public at future monthly meetings.

Black Diamond Open Space Stewardship Plan

Members of the Area Council's Environment Committee have attended two Public meetings held by the King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks (DNRP) to discuss a Stewardship Plan for the Open Space sandwiched between the Cities of Maple Valley and Black Diamond.

The Area Council prepared and submitted to DNRP a set of detailed Public Comments on the proposed Plan. Three issues were of particular importance: Forest Management, Urban-Rural Buffer, and Public Recreation. The Area Council asked DNRP to adhere to the Goals and Policies contained within the King County Open Space Plan.

In addition, a set of Recommendations was provided to DNRP: (1) Keep trails to a manageable number; (2) Avoid confrontations between mountain bikers and hikers/horseback riders for the sake of Public Safety; (3) Pay particular attention to sensitive areas and their ecological importance; (4) Strive to protect wildlife and natural areas; (5) Recognize the entire area under consideration is in the County's Rural Area; and (6) Ensure the final product does not simply "rubber stamp" what exists on the ground today.

Next Area Council Meeting

Monday, March 6, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection. All members of the Public are welcome to attend.

Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides an opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance.

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org.

*** NOTE: Four positions are open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley (see Service Area Map on our web site), you are invited to apply to become a member by sending a letter of interest to GMVUAC, P. O. Box 111, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or attend our next monthly meeting. ***