



New Department of Local Services

by Peter Rimbos, GMVUAC Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, April 2, the Area Council held its monthly meeting. Our Special Guest Speaker was King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) Director, Harold Taniguchi, who spoke about the proposed new Department of Local Services.

Department of Local Services

KCDOT Director, Harold Taniguchi, who is leading King County (KC) Executive Constantine's effort to create a new Department of Local Services, discussed how the intent of the new department is to improve how direct and contracted services are provided to both the Urban Unincorporated Areas (i.e., within the Urban Growth Area, but not part of any incorporated city) and the Rural Area. Approximately 250,000 live in Unincorporated King County (split about equally between urban and rural areas). If it were a city, it would be the state's second-largest just behind Seattle. The proposed new department still requires approval of the KC Council.

Director Taniguchi stated the new department would consist of the: (1) Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER); (2) Road Services of KCDOT; and (3) Community Service Area (CSA) program within the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP). There was concern some Divisions identified in earlier proposals (e.g., On-site Septic System [OSS] and Plumbing & Gas Piping programs from the Environmental Health Division of Public Health -- Seattle & King County) are no longer being considered to be included in the new department. He stated Service Agreements with those and other departments should help ensure much better efficiency in terms of time and cost. There was skepticism expressed as to why KC DPER can't already do such "*lateral*" communications with other departments.

The new department's director will report to King County Executive Constantine. A concern expressed was if the director of the new department would have sufficient authority to make serious changes. Director Taniguchi stated that was the intent. Upon approval by the KC Council, the new Department is expected to start operations on January 1, 2019, but Director Taniguchi stated that might prove optimistic as he stressed formulation of the new department is in its initial stages and much more work would be needed before its roles and responsibilities are firmly established.

Rural Area issues dominated the questions raised to Director Taniguchi: siting of urban-serving facilities in the Rural Area (e.g., Asphalt Facility; Marijuana Factory; Scrap Recycling Facility); mis-identification of OSSs as a major source for groundwater contamination issues; mis-interpretation by KC DPER of KC Code and KC Comprehensive Plan Policies; lack of meaningful KC Code enforcement by KC DPER; length of time for the common resident to obtain a simple permit while the applications from large developers or industries seem to speed through the system; massive pass-through traffic from adjacent cities on County roads and lack of "*regional*" concurrency management; KC Staff lack of understanding about the Rural Area and in some cases plain incompetence; etc. Director Taniguchi acknowledged these concerns.

Also, there was concern expressed the new department primarily would ensure needs are met for the *Urban* Unincorporated Areas, where KC has had difficulty in providing sufficient services given budget constraints, at the expense of the Rural Area. Director Taniguchi stated that would not be the case.

In conclusion, Director Taniguchi stated he was in a listening mode and he heard the many concerns raised by the Area Council and members of the Public in attendance. He felt, besides much improved communication, County personnel must better relate with Rural Area citizens to better understand issues residents face everyday.

Director Taniguchi stated he would attend a future Area Council monthly meeting later this year to provide a status update regarding the creation of the new Department of Local Services. He also will be a participant in the Annual KC CSA Town Hall Open House in May (see Upcoming Events below) and will be available to answer further questions from the Public at that time.

Upcoming Events

Area Council Monthly Meeting — Monday, May 7, from 7 - 9:30 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection across from the Police Precinct. All members of the Public are welcome. Each meeting begins with an open Public Comment period.

Annual KC CSA Town Hall Open House — Tuesday, May 15, from 7 - 9:00 PM, at the Hobart Church at 27524 SE 200th St, Hobart. Opportunity for citizens to speak directly with KC Councilman Reagan Dunn; the KC Sheriff, and other KC Department Directors to discuss issues affecting the Rural Area.

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. For more information, please visit: www.gmvuac.org.