



King County Permitting & Road Services

by Peter Rimbos, GMVUAC Corresponding Secretary

The Area Council held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, December 7. All of our Guest Speakers were from King County: Department of Local Services (DLS) Director, John Taylor; his Roads Division Director, Tricia Davis; and his Permitting Division Product Line Manager, Ty Peterson. Also, guests included: King County Road Engineer, Joann Kosai-Eng; DLS External Communications Manager, David Daw; King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) Manager, Ivan Miller; Roads Division Business Support, Kim Williams; and Marissa Alegria, Community Liaison.

Members from *other* Rural Area Unincorporated Area Councils (UACs) / Unincorporated Area Associations (UAAs) / Organizations also were in attendance: Four Creeks UAC (FCUAC), Upper Bear Creek UAC (UBCUAC), and Soos Creek Area Response (SCAR).

Tahoma School District Update

TSD Board member, Val Paganelli, discussed ongoing full remote learning. In January, there could be an increase in the schools of in-person activity, dependent on the Governor's latest guidelines.

King County Department of Local Services

Following a few introductory words from DLS Director, John Taylor, Area Council Chair, Steve Hister, asked each of the major subject-matter committees to pose questions for the King County guests.

Permitting and Code Enforcement

Growth Management Committee Chair, Peter Rimbos, posed the following questions on behalf of the Area Council:

Q1. *What process does the Permitting Division use to evaluate highly technical reports supplied by an applicant? Does the Permitting Division solicit outside consultants to do such evaluations? If not, what in-house expertise is available and how is it used ? [examples: Proposed Asphalt Facility; Erickson Trenchfilling]*

A1. Ty Peterson mentioned they have professional experts and engineers who conduct ~90% of their reviews in-house. They do outsource for structural engineering and geotechnical engineering reviews.

Q2. *What process is used to screen permit applications that request something that could violate KC Code or KCCP Policies ? [example: Upzone (Ravensdale)] King County Regional Planning Director, Lauren Smith, provided us "Tools for Protecting Rural Character and Limiting Rural Development" (as called for by RCW 36.70A.070): "15. Prohibit upzones; consider downzones. Establish clear criteria for all rural zoning categories to protect rural character and control rural development."*

A2. Ty Peterson previously had provided the following response: *"Where a rezone proposal is within the same land use classification and does not require a Comprehensive Plan change, Permitting is required to consider and process a complete application for such a privately initiated rezone. This process includes a hearing before the Hearing Examiner, whom will consider any public testimony, the Applicants request and Permitting's recommendation, then forwards a recommendation to King*

County Council for a final decision. Permitting will consider whether the proposal meets the policies of the King County Comprehensive Plan in making our recommendation.”

Q3. One of the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) Update “strategies” is to “Integrate social equity and public health into local and countywide planning.” **How is social justice and equity taken into account when permitting large industrial operations in the Rural Area ?** [examples: Cedar Hills Landfill expansion; Queen City Farms grading & soils delisting; Cedar Grove Compost—all three in the Cedar River Canyon’s “Sacrifice Zone” of multiple industrial scale operations]

A3. John Taylor mentioned that current KC social justice and equity policies deal with communities of color and historical disparities. Ty Peterson mentioned that some of these policies are relatively new and they have not applied them in a big way yet. KC has a different definition than we do. Ivan Miller stated that current KCCP policies do not cover our concerns.

Q4. **Is the Permitting Division expected to be “self-sustaining” ?**

A4. John Taylor said: “Yes.”

Q5. **Does the Permitting Division have sufficient staff and resources to properly process the many permit applications it receives ?**

A5. John Taylor said: “No, and there is a big backlog.”

Q6. **Does the Permitting Division have sufficient staff and resources to adequately monitor issued permits to identify potential violations ?**

A6. John Taylor said: “Yes.”

Q7. **How is Code Enforcement funded ? Are there sufficient Code Enforcement Staff and Resources to ensure King County Code and permit conditions are enforced and taken seriously ? Do permitting fees adequately cover such downstream code enforcement ?**

A7. John Taylor stated: “Code Enforcement is funded by the General Fund and collected fines. Code Enforcement, primarily, is complaint driven.”

Q8. **Are Permits issued with specific Conditions the Permitting Division does not have the resources to enforce ?**

A8. John Taylor stated: “There are extreme cases at each end of the spectrum. Some people are incredibly egregious in not meeting conditions. Unfortunately, King County does not always have the tools and code to handle some of these. The Code Enforcement part of the King County Code is inadequate, as it is based on past concerns that dealt with strong property rights. King County does not have injunctive power.”

Services Indirectly Provided by DLS

Area Council Chair, Steve Hiester, sitting in for the Environment Committee Chair, LarKen Buchanan, posed the following question on behalf of the Area Council:

Q9. **What services does DLS procure or coordinate with other County departments to serve Rural Area residents?**

A9. John Taylor stated: “There are Service Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with other King County departments. The King County Council authorized the development of Community Needs Lists to identify desired connections for services. When your organizations contact other King County departments, please keep DLS in the loop (by contacting either David Daw and Marissa Alegria / Ernesto (Bong) Sto.Domingo) to ensure we stay aware of your concerns and can help facilitate responses and solutions with those other King County departments. DLS has SPAs with: Natural Resources & Parks (DNRP), Public Health, Regional Animal Services, Community and Health Services (DCHS) (under negotiation), Executive Services, Sheriff, and Metro (under negotiation).”

Transportation

Transportation Committee Chair, Susan Harvey, posed the following questions on behalf of the Area Council:

Q10. **How do the Roads and Permitting Divisions interact in the formation and maintenance and financing when contracting for Haul-Route Agreements (HRAs) ? How can King County be certain that Rural Area roads are actually getting reimbursed from issued permits ?**

A10. JoAnn Kosai-Eng stated: “HRAs typically are for 5-yrs. The Roads Division monitors the agreements and works with the Permitting Division to address cases where number of trips are exceeded and works this through the issued permit(s). An HRA also can be renegotiated should operations change or are much different than originally planned. The Roads Division has flexibility.”

Q11. **How often and by what methods are road classifications (Principal, Minor, & Collector Arterials) updated based on new traffic flow and volume data ?**

A11. JoAnn Kosai-Eng stated: “Road classifications are updated in the periodic King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP) Update process.”

Q12. **Why does the right-of-way (ROW) road tax money for utilities go to the General Fund and not to help support roads in the Rural Area ?**

A12. John Taylor stated: “That was a decision by the King County Executive and King County Council.”

General Questions

Q13. **How does DLS interface with the King County Council Local Services Committee ?**

A13. John Taylor stated: “The Local Services Committee (<https://www.kingcounty.gov/council/committees/local.aspx>) hasn’t met since the pandemic.”

Issues/Questions for State Legislature

The Area Council decided to develop a list of issues and questions to provide to District #5 State Legislators for the 2021 session. This is in response to a request State Representative, Bill Ramos, made at the Area Council’s July meeting.

Upcoming Major Tasks

The Area Council discussed three major tasks on which it will be working in the new year.

Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) Update: Draft Chapter “Strategies” were released by King County on December 2. Draft Policies will be released on January 27, 2021. Draft Chapters will be released on February 24, 2021. A Public Review Draft will be released in April/May 2021. The Area Council is leading an effort of all the Rural Area UACs/UAs to review and prepare/submit detailed Comments to King County.

Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) Update: On August 20 the King County Executive submitted his Draft Plan to the King County Council, which assigned it to its Mobility and Environment Committee. The Area Council is leading an effort of all the Rural Area UACs/UAs to review and prepare/submit detailed Comments to King County and to participate in Public Hearings possibly in March/April 2021.

Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (CHRLF) 2020 Site Development Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS): The Area Council’s Environment Committee (<http://gmvuac.org/environment>) will review and prepare Comments on the FEIS as a followup to its detailed Comments on the Draft EIS submitted to King County in October (see: <http://gmvuac.org/cedar-hills-regional-landfill/>).

Upcoming Area Council Meetings

The next Area Council regular monthly meeting will be held on Monday, January 4, 2021, which will be another “virtual” meeting via Zoom—access information will be posted on the Area Council’s website www.gmvuac.org.

All regular monthly meetings are held on the first Monday of the month, from 7 - 9:30 PM. Meeting announcements are published in the *Voice of the Valley*, the Area Council’s website (www.gmvuac.org) and local NextDoor platforms. You can also find us on Facebook. All are welcome with each meeting beginning with an open Public Comment period. *[When State restrictions are lifted, the Area Council will again meet face-to-face with members of the Public invited to attend and continue to invite Guest Speakers on topics of key local and regional interest. Meetings will be held at the Maple*

Valley Fire Station—SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection directly across from the Police Precinct.]

Area Council Membership

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally recognized advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. The Area Council's *Vision Statement* is:

“Our community’s Rural Character will be supported by facilitating strong local ties and communication between the public, organizations, and government; promoting locally owned businesses and supporting quality education; protecting the environment, and maintaining landowners’ rights and responsibilities; promoting controlled and well-planned growth with appropriate infrastructure; ensuring proper representation for rural interests and needs; and supporting the health and safety and the privacy of our vibrant community.”

The twelve-seat Area Council currently has three open seats. If you have an interest in joining please send an e-mail to: info@gmvuac.org or attend a monthly meeting and express your interest.

Citizens who are not members of the Area Council *or* do not live within the Tahoma School District still are eligible to join and serve on any of the Area Council’s three major subject-matter Committees: Environment, Growth Management, or Transportation, as well as the Ad Hoc Economic Committee, Public Relations Committee, and Train Show Committee. The Area Council welcomes your participation. For information on each of these committees please see the Area Council’s web site: www.gmvuac.org and use the drop-down menu under *Committees*. Thank you.