



Community Needs

by Peter Rimbos, GMVUAC Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, June 1, the Area Council held its Regular Monthly Meeting at the Maple Valley Fire Station at 22225 SE 231st St and via Zoom. Major topics discussed were: (1) Community Needs; (2) Local Subarea Plan; and (3) Docket Requests.

Community Needs

Becka Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer with the King County (KC) Department of Local Services (DLS), discussed how local communities can participate in identifying needs. Such Community Needs Lists (CNLs) are meant to identify: Services, Programs, Facilities, and Capital-Improvements. Local communities are defined by KC [Community Service Areas](#) (CSAs). We are in the *Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River* CSA.

The KC Council has tasked the DLS to develop and propose a *new* CNL process by the end of this year, so as to tailor an engagement strategy that: (1) minimizes community burden, (2) gathers actionable feedback, (3) manages expectations around what KC can realistically deliver, (4) streamlines the volume of data received, (5) ensures inclusive access, and (6) allows sharing of more meaningful updates with the community and to do so more effectively.

DLS's initial plan is to gather feedback on higher-level policy priorities and ask each community to rank them based on what matters most to them. KC would use a focused Survey centered on priorities that can realistically be delivered and allow KC to gather community input while also helping better prioritize and rank community needs. DLS would conduct public engagement during the survey period to maximize participation and reach non-online audiences. The survey and in-person engagement would be in addition to DLS's regular, ongoing engagement at meetings like the GMVUAC.

After collecting Survey responses, KC would evaluate the data and work with its various departments to identify projects connected with priorities in each community. Departments would use these priorities to inform their budget processes, levy development, and other up-stream funding opportunities.

The Area Council expressed some concern with the continued heavy reliance on a Survey, especially when the number of questions and any intended or unintended slant to those questions could be important to what feedback is received. Surveys can be useful as a snapshot in time and for *limited* applications, but do not and cannot take the place of meeting people where they are and having conversations, not just checking some boxes on a survey form.

The Area Council stated that many of the decisions being made are complex, and require nuanced conversations and mutual understanding, such that it would behoove KC officials to meet with the people in the communities where they live, for example at: Special Public meetings; Unincorporated Area Council/Association meetings; out in the field at planned events; etc.

Finally, the Area Council expressed concern that the stated purpose of CNLs—to identify services, programs, facilities, and capital improvements—is more akin to *unincorporated urban areas* rather than *rural areas* where land stewardship and environmental preservation are very important to maintaining Rural Character; and where the siting of urban-serving facilities and poor to little oversight of major mining activities are major concerns.

Local Subarea Plan

Susan McLain, Principal Long-Range Planner, with the KC DLS, discussed the next steps in the Greater Maple Valley Cedar River (GMVCR) Community Services Area (CSA) [Subarea Plan](#). A sub-area plan: (1) Sets a vision for the future of the community; (2) Helps guide how KC makes decisions about land use and development; (3) Helps KC meet the needs of the people it serves; and (4) Brings KC government and communities together to plan growth in an equitable and responsible way.

Ms. McLain and Subarea Planning Staff currently are reviewing Public Comments on the *Preliminary Draft* which will help inform preparation of the Public Review Draft (PRD) to be released this Fall. Ms. McLain described the Public Comments received, which were primarily from the Area Council.

An Inter-Departmental Team (IDT) of technical experts will be reviewing Public Comment on the *Preliminary Draft* in-depth. The Area Council asked how it can interface with the IDT on specific subjects/concerns identified in its detailed review of the *Preliminary Draft* and its [extensive edits and comments](#) developed and submitted to KC. Ms. McLain stated she will be the conduit for such discussions. The Area Council requested one-on-one meetings with its key technical people and the IDT's technical people. Ms. McLain stated she will consider that and discuss it with IDT members.

Docket Requests

The Joint Team of Urban and Rural Unincorporated Area organizations, coordinated by the Area Council, submitted four Docket Request to KC by the end of 2025:

1. Amend Rural Neighborhood Commercial Center (RNCC) policy / code to allow only businesses (the express purpose of RNCCs) and prohibit housing, which would displace businesses (see: [RNCCs](#)).
2. Amend Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) code to adequately address environmental, health, and safety (see: [BESS](#)). Due to a tight deadline at the end of the year, this was prepared and submitted by individuals who represented a *subset* of Joint Team members.
3. Amend, in the Rural Area, Agriculture and Forestry Product Processing policy / code to require materials be grown in KC (see: [Local Agricultural and Forest Product Processing](#)).
4. Amend Mineral Operations 5-yr Periodic Review policy / code to include the Mining Reclamation (see: [Mining Operations Periodic Reviews](#)).

On April 30 KC published its ([2026 Docket Report](#)), which detailed its decisions on each Docket Request received in 2025 from the Public. Each of the above-listed Docket Requests were rejected for a variety of reasons.

The Joint Team did an [Autopsy](#) of that report. In many cases KC felt there was no “time urgency,” thus the specific requests could wait until the *2034 King County Comprehensive plan (KCCP) Major Ten-Year Update* rather than being *reconsidered* in an Annual Update or the *2029 Mid-Point KCCP Update*. The Joint Team believes it did include some time urgency, but maybe not as directly as KC wanted.

The 2026 Docket Report is not good news for the KC Rural Area, but the issues won't go away and will only fester until they are addressed, so the Joint Team will continue to press on these concerns until satisfactory resolutions are agreed to and implemented.

Next Area Council Meeting

The next Area Council monthly meeting will be held **Monday, July 6, 2026**, from 7 - 9:30 PM at the Maple Valley Fire Station at 22225 SE 231st St (across from the KC Sheriff's Precinct).

Meetings are held on the *first* Monday of the month (except for Holidays, when they are held on the *second* Monday). All meeting announcements, agendas, and Zoom information are posted on the [Area Council's Website](#) and local *NextDoor* platforms. You can also find us on our [FaceBook page](#). Each meeting begins with an open Public Comment period where anyone can voice concerns, comments, etc.

Area Council Membership

Your Area Council, founded in 1978, is one of the longest continuously active local councils in King County. It 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 (TSD). The Area Council, in "*working to keep the Rural Area rural*," collaborates *regionally* with other King County Rural Area organizations through both the *Joint Rural Team* and its *Joint Transportation Initiative*.

The twelve-seat Area Council has four open seats. If you wish to join, please send an e-mail to: info@gmvuac.org *or* attend (either in-person or virtually) a monthly meeting and express your interest. To be eligible to join as a *Member* you need to live *within* the TSD.

Residents, even those not living *within* the TSD, are eligible to become *Associate Members* who can serve on any Area Council Committee: *Economic, Environment, Growth Management, Transportation, Public Relations, or Train Show*—please see the Area Council's [Website](#) and use the drop-down menu under *Committees*.

On our Home page recent *Monthly Meeting Summary Articles* can be in the *2026/2025 GMVUAC Monthly Meeting Articles* box (or by using the drop-down menu under *Correspondence*).