

PROGRAM/PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2009

The meeting of the Policy/Project Review Committee was held at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission office. At 5:37 PM, C. Steen opened the meeting.

ATTENDANCE:

Commission: Baderstadt, Andrea ; Garrett, Harold ; Guernsey, Michael ; Howrigan, Patrick ; Kade, Barry ; Kittell, William ; Lambert, John ; Leach, Christopher ; Peirce, David ; Roberge, Richard ; Speer, Neal ; Steen, Colleen ; Charron, Claude ; Manning, Bob .

Staff: G. Brunswick.

1) Minutes. C. Steen asked for comments on the April and May meeting minutes.

D. Peirce motioned to accept the April and May meeting minutes. R. Roberge seconded. Motion passed.

2) Staff updates.

ATV Use on State Lands. G. Brunswick updated the Committee on a policy proposed that would allow ATV's to be used on state lands. Bethany and Catherine went ahead and submitted comments with approval from Board Chair Mike Guernsey because there was limited time to comment. She noted that comments are available to review. Brunswick summarized some of the points made in the staff comments. B. Kade noted that until the state has better enforcement, state lands should be closed to ATV use. The Committee continued with general discussion on the policy. M. Guernsey explained his participation in creating the comments and that he believed the comments consisted of issues known to be Commission policy, not anything new.

Georgia Wind. G. Brunswick updated the Committee on the status of the Georgia Mountain Wind project. The Commission was granted permissive intervention. Brunswick will submit testimony based on the approved comments as necessary during the public hearings taking place over the summer. She will continue to provide updates.

Wagon Wheel. G. Brunswick updated the Committee that no permit has yet been issued and that she believed they are still sorting out issues with the Stormwater Division and the Agency of Transportation.

NRB Rules. G. Brunswick updated the Committee on the amendments to the Natural Resource Board Rules. The rules are now effective with no changes to the section related to a de-minimus exemption for minor projects. There was discussion on when and how projects would be granted the exemption. It bothers many Committee members that they will not know when an exemption has been granted until after the fact if at all. Further discussion on this issue continued related to whether the Committee should respond to the Natural Resource Board.

D. Peirce motioned that the Committee ask the full Board to submit a request to the District Commission that a copy of letters regarding de-minimus exemptions or denials be sent to the Regional Planning Commission. M. Guernsey seconded. Motion passed. N. Spear voted no.

The Committee discussed N. Spear's concerns. He is not sure that receiving a copy of the exemption letters will make a difference. The Committee agreed that Spear's concerns should be discussed at full board level.

3) Project Review.

Redeeming Grace Church. Brunswick summarized the proposal for a 7,700 square foot church with office space, classrooms, and kitchen facilities on a 42 acre parcel in Georgia. Brunswick noted that it is on agricultural resource lands and includes onsite mitigation for 2.7 acres of agricultural soils. She explained that the church has a capacity of 299 people and proposes 56 parking spaces. Many Committee members expressed concern that parking may not be adequate. There was also discussion of cumulative traffic impacts on Route 7, especially on Sunday morning.

Many Committee members were concerned whether the area of agricultural mitigation is of equally good soils as the impacted land.

Many Committee members agreed that incorporating a surplus parking area with a pervious surface would be a good way to address the parking issue, while using low impact development.

D. Peirce motioned to send a letter noting no conflict with the Regional Plan with comments on parking, agricultural mitigation of equal soils, and low impact development as discussed. D. Roberge seconded. Motion passed.

T-Mobile Cell Tower. C. Steen summarized the project, noting that it is a proposal for a cell tower off Nichols Road in Fairfax. Brunswick noted that a potential concern might be that it is a new tower and not a co-location. There was discussion about when cell companies choose to co-locate versus build a new tower. It was noted that T-Mobile is open to other companies co-locating on the tower. There was question as to whether cell companies are required to allow co-location. N. Spear believes that they are not required to. Many Committee members agreed that there should be a decommissioning plan, but there is no conflict with the regional plan.

M. Guernsey made a motion to send a letter noting no conflict with the Regional Plan with a comment that a decommissioning plan should be required. B. Kade seconded. Motion passed.

Goodrich PUD. G. Brunswick summarized the project, noting that it is a 45 unit PUD on 8.71 acres just south of the City on Route 7 and it qualifies for substantial regional impact. Brunswick explained that the Committee commented on a preliminary site plan for this project. She read the Committee's concerns: the project's location outside the growth center; potential incompatibilities with adjacent industrial uses; the need to connect internal sidewalks with existing sidewalks on Route 7; the need to coordinate access to this site with existing access points along Route 7; the need to consider and plan for future traffic impacts on the access road and nearby intersections; the need to provide affordable housing in St. Albans Town; and the incorporation and management of appropriate open space and recreation lands within the project. The Committee discussed whether access to the project was adequate. Brunswick noted that there was no traffic study completed and that the Agency of Transportation has issued a letter of intent. The Committee discussed the project's impact on wetlands. The Committee discussed the importance of low impact development.

Brunswick noted that these comments would need to be approved by the Executive Committee since the July Board meeting is canceled.

B. Kade motioned to draft a letter of comments that included the concerns listed in the preliminary letter of comments. B. Kittell seconded. Motion passed.

3) Other Business.

Vice Chair.

M. Guernsey nominated N. Spear as Vice Chair. N. Spear accepted the nomination. D. Peirce seconded. Motion passed.

Committee Assignments. C. Steen asked Committee members if they would all like to continue serving on the Project Review Committee. All members did.

M. Guernsey discussed the issue of moderating the maintenance of stormwater ponds in the region. D. Peirce noted that it should be the municipalities' responsibility related to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy. N. Spear noted that municipalities should be paid by the state to do it. The Committee continued to discuss this issue.

M. Guernsey noted that the Commission should have a broader discussion on the issue. Brunswick agreed to discuss the idea with Catherine and Deb and will provide follow-up.

B. Kittell moved to adjourn. B. Kade seconded. Adjourned at 6:43.

DRAFT