

Community Development Update

December 9, 2024

10:31 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Lewis County Community Development Director Mindy Brooks, LC County Engineer Geoff Soderquist, LC Public Health and Social Services Director Meja Handlen, LC Public Works Director Josh Metcalf, Chehalis Public Works Director Lance Bunker, Centralia City Attorney Kyle Manley, Chehalis Community Development Director Malissa Paulsen, Centralia City Manager Michael Thomas, Chehalis City Manager Stacy Denham, Centralia Community Development Director Emil Pierson, Lewis County Senior Long-Range Planner Guilherme Motta

Guest(s):

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

Mindy Brooks reviewed upcoming changes to state law, which will consolidate local permit review processes effective Jan. 1, 2025.

Mindy said the county currently allows cities to apply their own their zoning designations and development regulations to land in unincorporated urban growth areas (UGAs). She said current interlocal agreements with Chehalis and Centralia outline the following:

- The cities and County jointly manage permitting in the UGAs, with the County permitting public rights-of-way and impacts to Shoreline and floodplain because legally the county cannot abdicate those responsibilities.
- Lewis County Public Works maintains the public rights-of-way in the UGAs. Mindy said SB 5290 makes it impossible to continue with that practice.

Mindy said the county will have to manage all permitting in the UGAs in order to meet the requirements outlined in SB 5290.

She proposed the commissioners select one of the following two options:

- **Option 1 - Urban development:** Apply urban zoning and development regulations, which would mean high-density residential development of at least 4 dwelling units per acre and county urban road standards.
- **Option 2 - Rural development:** Apply rural zoning and development regulations, which would mean allowing industrial and commercial development similar to what is allowed under city zoning but only allow residential development at one dwelling unit per 5 acres.

Mindy recommended that regardless of which option the commissioners chose, the county terminate its current UGA co-management ILAs with Centralia and Chehalis as soon as possible and create a

temporary moratorium on new development applications in the unincorporated UGAs. She noted there are some permits already in the process that would require memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to proceed.

Mindy noted that Community Development will incorporate the BOCC's direction when it updates the Comprehensive Plan in September 2025.

The commissioners directed staff to proceed with Option 2 and to reach out to Centralia, Chehalis, the fire districts and the state legislators.

Chehalis City Manager Stacy Denham and Centralia City Manager Michael Thomas and stressed the importance of a coordinated effort regarding impact fees to offset the costs associated with development.

Meeting ended at 11:27 a.m.