

**MINUTES
CITY OF LANGLEY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
November 10, 2008**

Leah Green, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Leah Green (Chair), Dave Schmidt, Cary Peterson,
Michael Cramer
Members Absent: Nancy Rowan
Staff Present: Fred Evander, Kathleen Landel
Council Present: Rene Neff, Robert Gilman
Guests: Chris Hilton, Whidbey Camano Land Trust
Larry Kwarsick, Island County Conservation Futures Fund
Citizens Advisory Board

MINUTES

Leah Green asked for approval of the October 27, 2008 minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

AGENDA REVIEW

Leah Green reviewed the meeting agenda and asked if there were any items that needed to be added. There were no items to add.

LAND ACQUISITION AND STEWARDSHIP TOOLS - Discussion

Chris Hilton, land protection specialist with the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT), gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached) covering: information on WCLT; the tools for land protection planning and setting priorities including natural resources mapping and community input; land protection tools including fee simple purchase, agency coops and conservation easements; an explanation of conservation easements and their benefits; an overview of different types of successful land projects; funding sources and funding successes.

There was discussion on funding sources that would be available to the City. Hilton said that many of the funding sources WCLT accesses would be available to the City. There are state sources for parks infrastructure that WCLT does not tap that would be appropriate for City projects. Hilton mentioned that the WCLT is available to partner with the City on projects where there are overlapping priorities.

A question on how best to approach landowners was raised. Hilton said that the best approach is to find the common passion and common ground and what is the landowner's focus. Hilton can provide materials on working with landowners.

There was a question on whether the WCLT is currently working with any landowners in Langley. Hilton responded that because conversations with landowners are confidential that she isn't able to disclose any information. There was discussion on having a way to share information on potential projects so that WCLT would be aware of the City's priorities.

A question was asked on what funding sources are available to protect wildlife corridors. Hilton said that both the county conservation futures fund and the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program's urban wildlife program would be good funding sources to look at.

Larry Kwarsick, chair of the Island County Conservation Futures Fund Citizen Advisory Board (CAB), spoke about the county's funding source for land conservation. Kwarsick was the county planning director during the development of county conservation funding tools. Kwarsick provided a context for the county conservation futures program. State laws provide several tools for counties to conserve lands:

- A conservation fund through an added real estate excise tax
- Conservation futures funding through added property tax
- A public benefit rating system classifying land at a lower property tax

Counties can establish through a vote of the people a real estate excise tax (REET) for conservation purposes. San Juan County is the only county that has implemented a program. It was noted that close to \$2.5 million per year is raised in the San Juan Land Bank program. Kwarsick worked with The Trust for Public Lands about ten years ago, to test public support for this type of program in Island County. At that time there was public support for a REET if it was for a specific period of time and there were targeted priorities. Kwarsick noted that with a change in commissioners that there may be more openness to establishing a REET program.

Island County made use of a state law that allowed, by a vote of the commissioners, an additional property tax for a conservation futures fund (CFF). CFF funds can be used for acquisition of fee lands or conservation easements and up to 15% of the funds can be used for maintenance of properties previously acquired. There is about \$500,000 generated in the CFF program annually. Over the years a number of properties have been purchased with these funds. Double Bluff, Maxwellton Salmon Adventure outdoor classroom and Greenbank Farm are just a few of the properties that have been purchased.

The CFF has two advisory bodies, the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Typically a notice to submit proposals is published in December with applications due towards the end of February. The TAG visits each property and reviews that property against the CFF criteria, ranks the projects and sends the rankings to the CAB. The CAB holds a public hearing with applicant presentations and citizen comments. The CAB makes a written report with their recommendations and sends these to the county commissioners. The board of commissioners can accept or change the recommendation.

There is currently a county ordinance that requires an equitable distribution of CFF funds geographically. Because of this, South Whidbey wasn't able to submit projects for several years due to the large amount of CFF funding for the Greenbank Farm.

Kwarsick also mentioned the county's public benefit rating system (PBRs) where landowners can apply for tax relief on qualified conservation lands when there is public access.

Kwarsick mentioned that the City's priorities need to be embedded in the Comp Plan. There was discussion about the protection of Noble Creek and whether this type of project would be eligible for funding during the next CFF cycle with the current Comp Plan. Kathleen Landel commented that if there was an immediate opportunity before the revision of the parks and open space element that the City should be able to consider a project if it is consistent with the Comp Plan.

Kwarsick mentioned that Island County has a Natural Lands Plan that includes Langley. Kwarsick also noted that the City has a vested interest in both the Langley UGA and the joint planning area (JPA) and suggested a more robust planning process with the county in the JPA.

Councilman Robert Gilman shared information on planning work on a transfer of development rights (TDR) program to implement the Comp Plan. There would need to be regulations that make a TDR program attractive. The Seattle experience with TDRs is being looked into, as well as the possibility of making TDRs an underlying basis of planning in Langley. An example of using TDRs for conservation purposes would be to selling off development rights from a property with conservation values.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

John Lee introduced himself. He lives outside of Langley on Overlook Drive. Lee is serving on the City's tree ordinance committee. He had no comments or questions except to say that important work was being done by the commission.

17-MONTH AGENDA REVIEW

Kathleen Landel reviewed the focus for the next several meetings including a tour of the Langley UGA and a meeting to prepare a mid-inventory presentation to the council for their December 15th council meeting.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 PM. The meeting was held at Langley City Hall. The next regular Parks & Open Space Commission meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 24, 2008 at 2:30 PM. Minutes were taken by Kathleen Landel.