

MT. BAKER FOOTHILLS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Meeting – March 16, 2005

Carole MacDonald, Chair, The Inn at Mount Baker
Alan Seid, Cascadia Training & Mediation
Phil Cloward, Mt. Baker Foothills Chamber
Carole Sharpe, Glacier
Lou Piotrowski, Foothills Chamber
Dodd Snodgrass, Port of B'ham
Jeff Margolis, Everybody's Store
Jeffrey Utter, Home & Energy Solutions
Judson Greif, Strategies 360
Francis Ayley, 4th Corner Exchange
Calvin Priest, 4th Corner Exchange
Anthony Kelley, Kelley Insurance

Richard Gantman, Mt Baker School Dist
Pat Milliken, Community Planning Consultant
Sam Crawford, County Council
Barbara Brenner, County Council
Ellen Baker, Resident
Susan Kirn, Whatcom Literacy Council
Rose Lathrop, Aiki Homes
Rob Staveland Aiki Homes
Roland Middleton, PDS
Matt Aamot, PDS
Sharon Digby, PDS

OPENING COMMENTS

Call to order by Carol at 1:02 pm. Welcome and introductions made.

Open Comment Session

- Jeff M suggested considering an EDA motto – Cultivating the Rural Renaissance.
- Tony Kelley said that Mt Baker School District is going to be in the red by \$200,000 for the next 2 years. He suggested limiting the impact to schools by development impact fees. Matt clarified that impact fees are collected at the time of permitting and are authorized by the Growth Management Act (GMA). Tony will research impact fees further and report at the May meeting.
- Lou announced that the website is up and running. It has 40-50 links.
- Tony announced he will be attending the 19th Annual Downtown Revitalization Training Institute in Centralia, WA April 27-29, 2005. Carole mentioned that she will be attending a CTED meeting on April 28th in Mt Vernon.
- Carole shared the website address to keep track of bills and voting in Olympia – www.washingtonvotes.org

PRESENTATIONS

ESL Tutors – Susan Kirn, Director of Development and Community Outreach, Whatcom Literacy Council (WLC)

Susan started the discussion by saying the illiteracy is a “silent crisis”, that it is not a headline grabber. One in five people are functionally illiterate. She passed out a handout delineating the affects of illiteracy on children, businesses, health, domestic violence, etc. She stated that as many as 30,000 adults in Whatcom County may be functionally illiterate.

Susan pointed out that illiteracy is fixable – it's not complicated or costly. The Literacy Council's main tool is volunteer tutors. A volunteer has to be 18 or over. Currently, there are 11 adults in Maple Falls waiting on a tutor.

Susan asked the EDA members to think about looking for ways to raise awareness of the impacts of illiteracy and volunteering to tutor. WLC provides training for free – 90 percent of their volunteers have never taught before.

Rick clarified that the school district funds can only go to school children. Susan suggested a collaboration with the schools, where WLC provides the funds which could be distributed through the school. Susan will look into this further and report back at the next meeting.

Cell Tower – Judson Grief, Dodd Snodgrass

Judson presented a slide show summary of his research to date on the feasibility of cell phone coverage/towers in non-cell phone areas. His slide show covered the obstacles, people in the region affected by lack of cell phone coverage, safety concerns, tourist concerns, incentives to providers, potential sites, projected costs, extra incentives and the next step in the process (see handout).

His suggestions for proceeding to the next step are: 1. find an expert or provider to help determine specifics of the project; determine locations and find exact costs, 2. make contact with local, state and federal representatives and get them involved, 3. determine funding for the project.

Verizon has shown interest in servicing the region and has been helpful thus far. A meeting is set up with T-Mobile to showcase the potential in the area. Other providers in the County are Nextel, Cingular and Sprint.

Dodd said that the Port met the April 14th deadline for WA Cert (provides a single point of access to state and federal community and economic development programs targeted to rural Washington). Sam clarified that this step was to get all the projects on the plate, not a request for funding. Dodd said that Economic Development Investment (EDI) Program is reviewing all WA Cert projects in May and then advancing them to County Council.

East County Update – Matt Aamot

The schedule for the Foothills Subarea Plan update is as follows: Fall 2005 – community meetings, beginning of 2006 hire a consultant and start the update, November 2006 anticipated adoption.

No date has been set for the Kendall Community charette, however, it is still in the works.

Update: 1. Aiki Homes: A pre-application meeting took place in November 2004 for the proposed residential development. 2. An application has been received for a Comp Plan amendment to rezone 25 of the 260 acres owned by Aiki Homes, from Urban Residential 4 dwellings/acre to General Commercial. 3. A conditional use permit application has been received for a lodge/motel/restaurant from Joseph Garcia. The March building permit information was handed out.

EDA will send a letter of support for the Aiki Homes rezone request.

4th Corner Exchange – Francis Ayley

Francis, originally from the UK, has run two businesses and created two local currencies, one of them the second most important in the UK. He has started a Whatcom County local currency – 4th Corner Exchange.

Francis discussed and answered questions about local currencies. 4th Corner Exchange has 77 members and trade is picking up. All transactions take place on the internet. There is no sales tax on “time dollars”. Francis mentioned there have been three cases in the US where the US government has attempted to collect tax and failed.

There will be an introductory meeting May 13th, 7pm at the Holly Street branch of WECU.

Subarea Plan – Pat Milliken

Pat stated that he needs a list of names for a subcommittee. Carole M will supply Pat with a list. The subarea boundary will be discussed at the next meeting.

Charter Review – Jeff Utter

The Charter Review members are discussing the number of County Council members, re-districting, and making Auditor, Assessor and Treasurer partisan. District-only voting for Council members will go before the voters in the fall.

By-Laws – Alan Seid

Alan distributed the draft by-laws and discussed different methods of decision-making – Robert’s Rules of Order and Quaker-based consensus. Sam objected to Article 1B of the draft by-laws; ... acting as an informal communication forum for government ... He does not want to confuse the public and stated that the seat of government is still 311 Grand Ave. After discussion, a more favorable wording suggested by Rob Staveland, was informally agreed upon - ... forum available to government... Due to lack of time, the discussion will be continued at the June meeting (Alan will not be at the May meeting).

COMMITTEE REPORTS

See handout from Phil.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:07pm.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at 1:00 pm in the Mt. Baker School District Office

Submitted by: Sharon Digby