

# MT. BAKER FOOTHILLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting – April 21, 2004

Mt. Baker School District Office

## In attendance:

Carole MacDonold – Chair, The Inn at Mount Baker  
Lou Piatrowski, Mt. Baker Foothills Chamber  
Alan Seid, Cascadia Training & Mediation  
Phil Cloward, Mt. Baker Foothills Chamber  
Rick Gantman, Mt. Baker School District  
Lisa Brown, Van Zandt Hall Association  
Jane Bottinhouse, Van Zandt Hall Association  
Richard Nevels, Bellingham Weekly  
Jan Eskola, Glacier Fire & Rescue – Commissioner  
Mike McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks & Rec.  
Amy Pederson, Whatcom County Planning Division  
Ellen Barton, Whatcom Council of Governments

Jeffrey McDougall  
Nan Laney  
Carole Sharpe  
Jeff Margolis, Everybody's Store  
Tom Stacey, WSDOT  
Tony Kelley, Kelley Insurance  
Russ Angus, Angus & Associates  
Louise Mugar, Mt. Baker Experience  
Bob Bromley, City of Sumas – Mayor  
Mike Brennan, Brennan & Co., LLC

## Guests:

Bill Elfo, Whatcom County Sheriff  
Cliff Langley, Whatcom County Sheriff Deputy  
Tom Jones, Wilbur Smith Associates  
Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments

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## OPENING COMMENT

Call to order by Carole at 1:05. Welcome and introductions made.

## PRESENTATIONS

### **East County Sheriff Update – Bill Elfo, Whatcom County Sheriff**

Sheriff Elfo introduced Deputy Cliff Langley who will be the new resident officer in the east county area. He will be serving the areas from Kendall to the east and will have a presence in the South Fork Valley as well. He is scheduled to start in June 2004. Deputy Langley will be working out of the Kendall Fire Station and it is expected that he will soon have a non-emergency phone line and e-mail address for people to contact him directly. It was emphasized that people should continue to dial 911 in emergency situations.

Sheriff Elfo discussed issues related to current jail limitations and subsequent impacts to law enforcement efforts throughout the county. He also discussed issues related to the presence of methamphetamine labs in the county. He mentioned that the Northwest Drug Task Force (County Sheriff and Bellingham Police) is focusing on meth lab investigation, enforcement, and complaint follow up. They are hoping that the program will be on board in August.

It was also noted that there will be upcoming training for a Reserve Academy. If anyone is interested, they can contact Alan Cheesman or Deputy Langley through the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office.

Deputy Langley indicated that he is open to attending future meetings to get to know the community and the east county area better.

### **WSDOT Commerce Corridor Study – Tom Jones, Wilbur Smith Associates**

Tom Jones explained that his firm, Wilbur Smith Associates, has been contracted by the State with funding from the State Legislature to do a feasibility study on the concept of a commerce corridor through Washington. One conceptual idea would be that it would run east of Interstate-5 and west of the mountains.

Their primary focus is to find out who would be interested in having a commerce corridor and who, if anyone, in the private sector would be willing to build, finance, and maintain it.

A conceptual commerce corridor could contain a variety of utility and transportation uses, including: gas pipelines, power lines, fiber optics and telecommunications, freight/passenger rail, truck freight, passenger cars, recreation trails, etc. One of the issues to be examined through the feasibility study is whether all of these potential uses could or should be co-located in one corridor and what it would take to do that.

It was emphasized that at the end of the feasibility study, there will not be a line drawn on a map.

Jeff Margolis asked whether Wilbur Smith Associates would consider utilizing either central or eastern Washington as potential siting alternatives in the commerce corridor study. Tom indicated that they would consider these other potential locations.

Tom showed several presentation slides and reviewed the steps and timeline for the feasibility study process. (His presentation slides can be found as part of a larger document at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/freight/CommerceCorridorFeasStudy.htm> .) He also noted that, as part of the feasibility study process, there will be two advisory forum meetings. One will be in early July and the other is scheduled for late October (specific dates and locations are not yet determined). He suggested that people continue to stay informed by visiting the WSDOT website, going to the forum meetings, or by contacting him.

Gordon Rogers stated that the WCOG's role in this issue is tied to previous study efforts related to improving commerce efficiency at the US/Canada border. An earlier study group was active for about 7 years, but their study was shelved. WCOG is now looking at the WSDOT Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study to be sure that the two studies are coordinated.

Jeff Margolis suggested that the EDA may want to present a report or letter to the consultants and/or commerce corridor feasibility study steering committee expressing local concerns, issues, etc. at the July advisory forum. It was also suggested that a group continue to be involved in this issue and keep the EDA updated.

Tom Stacey gave the WSDOT website (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/freight/CommerceCorridorFeasStudy.htm>) where people can access additional information about the Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study. Included on the site are the project management plan (schedule, tasks, responsibilities, deliverables, budget), the scope of work, steering committee information (roster, meeting minutes, project updates), and presentation materials.

## **ACTIONS**

Jeff Margolis and Jeff McDougall will coordinate to get local citizens together to discuss the Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study.

Jane indicated that she would make a copy of the video she took of the meeting available at Everybody's Store.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Rich reported that the Bellingham Weekly will be doing an article on the east county area. He noted that they are working on a project related to Scenic Byways.

Tony gave a brief update on the Northfork Community Resource Center.

## **NEXT MEETING:**

1:00 pm, Mt Baker School District Office, Wednesday, May 19th