



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Memorandum on Avalon Fully Contained Community Proposal

TO: GMA Steering Committee
FROM: Board of County Commissioners
DATE: October 12, 2016

As you know, a group of local property owners has submitted a comprehensive plan amendment proposal to Skagit County to amend the Countywide Planning Policies and the County's Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, and land use map, to allow for the designation of a new fully contained community (FCC) at Butler Hill.

The proposal calls for increasing the County's 20-year population forecast by 8,500 people, all of which would be allocated to the Avalon FCC. It also calls for other changes to the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) to allow the creation of new FCCs and ultimately could lead to the designation of a new FCC and non-municipal urban growth area at Butler Hill.

The proposed CPP amendments, the revision to the countywide population forecast and allocations, and the potential creation of a new UGA are all regional planning issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the GMA Steering Committee (GMASC) and will require consideration by the Committee at some point.¹

Given this background, there is a threshold question the County Commissioners would like to ask the GMASC *before* the County decides whether to docket or otherwise move forward with the Skagit Partners FCC proposal:

Is the GMASC willing at this time to consider revisiting the 20-year population forecast and allocations, and the policy framework they are based on, to allow for fully contained communities in Skagit County?

It is important for the County Commissioners to know the answer to that question before deciding whether to commit considerable time and resources to considering the Avalon proposal further. It also

¹ The current forecast and allocations that the GMASC considered and approved twice as part of the 2016 Update do not anticipate the need or desire for fully contained communities. Instead, they call for moderate population growth to respect Skagit County's unique character and quality of life; accommodating that growth in existing cities and towns and their UGAs; and focusing greater attention on employment growth to increase the County's jobs to population ratio.

honors the GMASC's role under the Framework Agreement in helping to formulate regional land use policy.

Proposed Process for GMASC Consideration

We propose the following process for considering this issue:

1. At the October 19 GMASC meeting, the applicants would make a presentation on the Avalon FCC proposal. County staff would then describe the process for considering FCCs generally, and the Avalon proposal specifically, if we decide to go down that path. GMA Technical Committee members (i.e., planning directors) should attend this meeting as well.
2. Following the October meeting, the Technical Committee would meet to formulate its recommendation to the Steering Committee on the above question.
3. At a follow-up meeting later this year, the Steering Committee would discuss and take action on the above question.

If the Steering Committee says no, it is not willing to consider revisiting the population forecasts and allocations to allow for FCCs, there appears to be little point in the County committing further time to considering the Avalon proposal.

On the other hand, if the Steering Committee indicates it is willing to reconsider the forecast and allocations to possibly make room for FCCs, then the Board would be more inclined to give the Avalon proposal and FCC issue further consideration. What that process would look like, and the Steering Committee's role in it, is further described below.

The Process for Considering FCCs

The process for considering FCCs generally, and the Avalon proposal in particular, would include the following major steps:

1. The County would initiate a non-project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The EIS would analyze issues including:
 - Potential impacts of FCCs on the county, cities and towns, utility and service providers, the economy, environment, natural resources, transportation, drainage, affordable housing, and other relevant considerations.
 - The GMA requirements for FCCs and their history in other counties that have permitted them.
 - Potential locations for FCCs in Skagit County, including Butler Hill and elsewhere.
 - Potential criteria for considering and approving FCCs.
 - Other issues as determined by the EIS scoping process.
2. The County would consult with the GMA Technical Committee regularly throughout the EIS process, including during development of the scope.

3. The EIS process would occur over a period of 12 – 18 months, and would include significant public outreach and comment opportunities.
4. The County would share the EIS analysis and findings with the GMASC.
5. The GMASC would determine whether it wanted to consider potential amendments to the CPPs to allow FCCs, including:
 - Revised population forecast and allocations.
 - FCC review and approval criteria.
 - Consideration of potential and preferred FCC locations.
 - Role of GMASC in considering specific FCC proposals.
6. The GMASC would approve preliminary recommendations on CPP changes (if any) to allow and create a population reserve for FCCs; those recommendations would be sent to each jurisdiction's legislative body for consideration.
7. Following consideration by each jurisdiction, the GMASC would consider final approval of proposed CPP changes (if any) to allow FCCs.
8. Final proposed changes to CPPs (if any) would be forwarded to Board of County Commissioners for adoption.
9. If changes to the CPPs are made to allow FCCs, the County would review the Avalon project proposal based on the framework established in the CPPs and on County policies and code developed to implement that framework.