

Debra L. Nicholson

From: Ellen Bynum <skye@cnw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 06, 2014 10:53 PM
To: Ron Wesen; KenDahlstedt; Sharon D. Dillon
Cc: LindaHammons; KirkJohnson; Paul Kriegel; FOSC Office
Subject: Additional information requested by Commissioner Wesen on proposed TDR program

Hello Commissioners:

A discussion with Commissioner Wesen after the hearing this morning, prompted me to write additional comments for your consideration in making a decision as to whether to implement a TDR program.

The comments I submitted addressed why you should NOT go forward with a TDR program at this time, even though much time and money has been spent on the project. Here are some other issues that I heard you wanting to support and here are some comments on these.

These are just suggestions to discuss and I would be glad to do so with you at any time.

1. The best support for small forest owners is a PDR program. PDRs are the only way I know of to provide permanent protection of forests, just like Farmland Legacy does for ag land. Finding a way to fund the program might involve asking for a tax increase for the program. Voters can say yes or no, and if the forest owners and the county makes a good enough case for the tax people may fund it. Perhaps the argument could be made that purchasing and retiring DRs on steep slopes will improve water quality, much like the argument that was made to conserve the Cedar River watershed for drinking water. Or in light of the Oso tragedy, the public might currently understand that forested slopes probably should not be built on (or under). The water quality issue could receive enough start up funds from grants to begin the program. And the program should include a calculation about what the cost of purchasing all of the DRs would be.

Since there are 1300 small forest owners in the association, and many are nearing retirement age, they could work with the legislature to create additional funding like Conservation Futures for small forest protection. The CF program passed after enough people understood the economics of the program and the public benefit, and the politics were favourable (of course). The County has never determined if citizens would support a forest protection program, or if there is regional support for such a program. To my knowledge there has been no polling as was done prior to implementation of the FLP. The County and the landowners have to do the work to make the argument for public support. A Forest PDR program is the simplest, easiest and least costly way to conserve those lands in perpetuity.

2. Absent agreements with the cities to use a TDR program, you can increase density in BVR using density bonus credits. Whether this is in the commercial or residential areas, the density bonus credit will generate income to offset infrastructure and/or contribute to one of the Legacy Programs (farm or forests). This is a cost effective way to generate funding and increase density. This might help in starting a PDR program for Forestry. Depending on demand, the price might be as high as what a developer would pay inside a city.

3. In looking at the total number of small forest DRs, there are less than 1,000. I don't know what the valuation of these might be individually or total, but if each was worth \$10,000 the entire zoning could be protected for \$10 million. It might be possible to use a matching fund for purchase all of these DRs at one time if you had agreement from the owners. While that seems like a lot of money, if half came from a federal or state funding

source, it might be possible to raise the balance over say 10 years from local support with the help of the Land Trust.

The public wants you to make the best decision on their behalf. TDRs will not serve to conserve more land nor can it increase density in places already designated rural. You need other "tools" to address the issues that you raised as concerns.

These are just a few ideas. As I find other solutions that might work I will be sure to pass them along to you.

If you would like to discuss any of these ideas further, please give me a call.

Thank you for your time and service.

Ellen

Ellen Bynum, Executive Director

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