

Snowden Community Council Meeting Minutes 03.06.2024 (03.14.2024)

Council Members present: Robert Conner (Fire Commissioner), Roger Gadway (Chair), Chuck Kleish (Treasurer), Tom Montag (Fire Commissioner), Lloyd Olson (Vice Chair), Jenn Sharp, and Chris Stein. Absent: None. There were 27 additional Snowden Community members present; and our Guest Speaker, Klickitat County District 2 (Snowden's Commissioner) Lori Zoller. With thanks to Fire District #3 for use of the Community Room of the Cherry Lane Fire Station, Roger reminded the community of our guidelines to raise our hand and be acknowledged before speaking, and then introduced Commissioner Zoller.

She began by introducing herself as a 42-year resident of Klickitat County; and said her job as County Commissioner is like being in a hurricane! She spoke under constraints imposed by the County Prosecutor, to protect the County as there are two current sites of litigation. Mrs. Zoller stated her #1 priority as a commissioner is to get an updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan (Comp Plan) in place. She has 10 years of experience on the Planning Commission Board and has seen how having an obsolete Comp Plan has prevented proper processing of applications through the Critical Use Permit process, and how this sometimes ends up in litigation. To bring the County Planning process up to date will begin with the Planning Commission Board considering the Critical Areas Ordinance. Then they will update the County Natural Resources Inventory (which will include looking at agricultural and timber lands), and next the Buildable Lands Inventory. Commissioner Zoller happily announced that the County finally has a new Planning Director, Mr. Scot Edelen who is very personable, and comes with considerable experience working with cities, counties, and Tribes. Commissioner Zoller expressed great hope and optimism in Mr. Edelen's leadership.

In describing the responsibilities and challenges of the Commissioners, Mrs. Zoller said the Commissioners are in charge of all the County Departments; and she is in charge of the Planning, and Resources Departments. The Commissioners only have control of elected officials' budgets (the Sheriff, Treasurer, Prosecutor, Clerk of the Court, and Auditor) but not their actions. As there are 3 Commissioners, two of them can't talk privately (to avoid the appearance of collusion) and it has made working relationships hard as she has been unable to get both fellow Commissioners together with her to plan their Board Meetings, to consult with the various County Departments, or to strategize. She wishes to establish a County Strategic Plan, wherein the BoCC and the Department heads would all have clarification on how the County should work together. Commissioner Zoller's responsibilities include serving on 12 different Boards of Directors. She shared the good news that one of them, the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, has just been placed on the State Capital Budget to build a Senior Disability and Memory Care Assisted Living facility in White Salmon.

Commissioner Zoller said she knows that having reliable, affordable Broadband is a big issue for the Snowden Council. She advised that the Commissioners are "leaders not rulers", so they can't make the private sector ISP's do anything; rather it is up to the people, the community, to organize and "do it yourselves". We could ask the BoCC for a letter of recommendation supporting our projects.

During Questions and Answers, the Commissioner said that The Roads Department revises their 6 Year Road Improvement Plan once a year, and if we have a problem road, we need to talk to the Road Department to get on their list, to tell the BoCC, to get put on their Meeting Agenda to talk about it; and that a dangerous situation will be bumped up the list.

Commissioner Zoller agreed that it would be better to stop making planning decisions than to keep creating lawsuits. She grew up in a rural lifestyle and would like to protect that in Klickitat County, but the pressure of growing population needs must also be met. Community comments emphasized that an updated Comp Plan is necessary before the County can competently make decisions. When asked if the County is going to invest in

creating Long Range Planning, Mrs. Zoller said one Commissioner says “yes”, and another says “no”; hopefully with the new Planning Director, there will be progress. The Commissioner said that getting organized, making it known what we want for our community and sharing our desires with the Commissioners in a positive way, like the community of Trout Lake does, is a good way to effect the positive change we want. Council members pointed out that Snowden has already done that and were disappointed to hear from the previous Planning Director that we would be the LAST to have our Sub-Area plan revised, as ours is among the most current. There were questions about funding available to help the Council have addresses and postage for mailings, and funding for groundwater availability studies. Would the County act on our behalf to get some of the millions allocated for rural counties by the Department of Commerce? As a non-profit, the SCC cannot apply for funds, but the County can. The Commissioner said that the County would get some of the available funds to study water in Klickitat County when the Planning Department conducts the Natural Resources Inventory. In response to a question on how to better engage with the State Fish & Wildlife Department to inform them about issues with our native wildlife populations, Commissioner Zoller told us that White Salmon has an office with our own wildlife biologist, and that the Commissioner would send us her contact information.

When asked if she would be willing to support a moratorium on rezoning until the County Planning Department updates the Comp Plan, Commissioner Zoller said “Yes”. Then the moratorium would need just one more Commissioner to vote “Yes”. The Commissioner recommends that we talk to the other Commissioners, and that we bring it up with the Planning Director. We could get the moratorium on the BoCC Agenda; and she would alert us when the matter comes up.

There is an urgent concern regarding the Emergency Management Department’s Emergency Alert System failing to reliably notify citizens, and the Commissioner was asked what they were doing about it. She replied that the BoCC had brought the matter up to the EM Department director. She described fractures between the County Departments; between each other, and with the BoCC. This is why she is working for a County Strategic Plan. The Commissioner is hopeful because there is a new County Financial Officer and a Finance Committee who require the Departments to submit their budgets. This will help coordinate the Departments to more functionally work together and with the Commissioners. She said that to become a Charter County with a 5 member Board has advantages, but also disadvantages. Regarding the Sheriff’s office – some people like electing the Sheriff, and some would like the BoCC to be able to exercise more control over the Officer. Commissioner Zoller ended her conversation by urging us to reach out to her with our concerns.

Roger thanked Commissioner Lori Zoller for her time and for speaking with us; and called the meeting to order at (about) 8:00 PM.

Meeting Minutes for the February meeting were approved as corrected and submitted.

Treasurer’s Report: As Chuck has been absent, Roger reported that the SCC began the month of February with a balance of \$1,351.09. We received \$1700 to support the SEPA appeal, \$5.00 in table donations, and interest income of \$0.04. We spent \$1,106 filing the appeal; the current balance is \$1,950.13. Treasurer’s Report was approved as presented.

There were no **Additions to the Agenda**.

Old Business:

Website Committee: Jenn reported that the Facebook Sub-Committee has created a preliminary FB Group for the SCC, and she brought screen shots of the home pages featuring a photograph by community member Jim Blilie; a page with 3 “membership” questions, and a page with Ground Rules for Engagement. She passed

these pages around, asking for comments and feedback. During discussion Jenn clarified that this FB group will not be “chatty” as the existing and very active Snowden Community FB group, but will focus exclusively on PSA’s relative to Snowden, and on the activities of the SCC, with links to more information on the SCC website. The site will be monitored by Committee administrators, and the community will be able to comment, but not post. The Committee will actively engage with the earlier FB Group when there is new activity on the SCC FB Group. Jenn asked for more people to volunteer to help with the FB Group.

Broadband Committee: Roger said there wasn’t a lot to report, as there was no recent State’s Broadband Office monthly meeting available. He reviewed the good news that the State goal for Klickitat County is that high speed internet will be available to every household, for a monthly cost of around \$50. To achieve this, the state will create groupings of one thousand households, including both difficult and easy to serve sites. (Snowden will be divided into several different groups, as it is largely a “difficult to serve” area.) ISPs will bid to provide service to these groups, prioritizing using fiber where possible but recognizing that the rugged terrain will require using hybrid technologies, such as using fixed wireless and creating hubs and repeaters. ISPs will be required to provide open access service, that is sharing their publicly funded infrastructure with other providers. Discussion highlighted that the KC Public Utilities District is willing to let local ISP Klicknet lease their utility poles for installing internet infrastructure, though they are otherwise unwilling to help their clientele acquire high speed affordable internet service. (25 of 28 Washington State PUDs DO support providing high speed internet to their citizenry.)

SEPA Appeal: Roger reported that the appeal was filed February 01, but there still has not been a response from the County. Jenn guesses that the SEPA Appeal and the Rezone Application will be heard simultaneously, but we don’t have a date, or know if the hearing will be before the BoCC or a contracted Hearing Examiner. However, it will be an opportunity for public comments. During discussion, some advised that the SCC be prepared to hire a lawyer for the Hearing; however, others counseled that (so far) the Hearing will be an administrative process, not requiring a lawyer. Discussion further identified that the Hearing will be an opportunity to make our case for a Moratorium on Rezones until the Comp Plan can be updated; and, that the proposed Wilson-Monroe Rezone application could be designated a “sub-division” as it would create 5 contiguous lots. A sub-division is required to meet higher standards than a rezone, especially regarding water availability. Jenn proposed a motion changing the “Comp Plan Up-Date Committee” name to “Land Use Committee”. Kirk Walston made the motion, which was seconded by Chuck, and carried by unanimous vote.

New Business: There was no report on the Traffic on Snowden Rd. problems.

Fire Commissioner’s Report: Tom shared the recent Columbia Gorge News front page story: “On February 22 the West Klickitat Regional Fire Authority (WKRFA) planning committee met for the first time as a new entity, and appointed subcommittee members, discussed the RFA vision and started to identify goals and responsibilities of the authority.” Bea briefly reported on the Wildfire Mitigation Community Meeting held jointly by KCFD#3 Chief Long, the Underwood Conservation District, the DNR, and MARS (Mt Adams Resource Stewards). She said these agencies provide on-site evaluation and help with fire mitigation plans, they can direct us to find help with the labor, access to tools and equipment, information on how to conduct strategic controlled burns, and funding to help pay for fire protection. More Community Fire Mitigation meetings are scheduled in Underwood on March 14, and in High Prairie on March 15 (see SCC Website for more information.).

Bridge Authority Report: Eric announced that the Authority has signed a contract with Kewill West to design and build Phase 1, which should last from now until the end of 2024. The challenge now is getting Washington

and Oregon States to come up with their pledged funds. The new Aesthetics Committee has 25 or so members, they are tasked to create guidelines, and get public input at a series of public workshops.

For the Good of the Order: The group discussed potential speakers to address the SCC. Keaton Curtiss from KC Economic Development Office will attend the April meeting to talk about bringing broadband to rural Klickitat County. Other possible guests discussed included the new KC Planning Director Scott Edelen; FD#3 Chief Wes Long; and the KC PUD.

The Meeting was adjourned at around 8:45 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Beatrice Lackaff

(Secretary Pro-tem)