



Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
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Re: Preliminary Hearing – Joint Planning Commission Review of the May 2010 Draft

Below are the comments Pegi Sobey, Board Chair, verbally presented at the June 10, 2010, hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and again thank you for all the work you have put into this process.

Tonight, I'd ask that you refer to our written comments that we submitted on May 28, where we provided detailed comments and concerns on clarifying the Future Land Use Plan review process, the Administration and Energy Conservation chapters, as well as on potential key inconsistencies in the latest draft.

However, after reviewing the latest staff report, which included comments by the planning commissioners, we have additional comments and concerns regarding how you will go about the rest of your review on the “themes and policies” section. We fully support your goal to forward a draft document with as few inconsistencies as possible. However, we are also confident that you will stick to the rules you agreed upon at your last hearing. When you agreed upon this procedure, for the most part, the public comment adhered to that procedure. We trust that you, as commissioners, will continue to do the same. This is very important in terms of maintaining overall public confidence in the process. The public understands that the intent of the “no revote” rule was to ensure that you would not rehash topics that had already been discussed, which could lead to a circular, endless discussion at the planning commission level.

Once you go down the road of rehashing topic after topic, you could then end up with yet another fundamentally different fourth draft, which the public will be called on again to review, all before anything even goes to elected officials. This will discourage public involvement – particularly as we enter the fourth year of this process.

We trust that the entire process to date, which includes years of participation on the part of the public - including those of previous planning commissioners - will be respected at the planning commission level. Looking ahead, elected officials must work to fix and clarify key issues of the plan, particularly those that have been difficult to reconcile across the two jurisdictions during your review.

To make a point on the process, any member of the public, including the Conservation Alliance, could provide numerous examples of inconsistencies that could lead to revotes. But we believe revisiting all the concerns on the part of all citizens involved was not the intent of this next phase of your review as commissioners. Here are a couple of examples:

- It's inconsistent to place wildlife as the valley's top priority, in any kind of meaningful way, and still be planning to at a minimum approximately double what's on the ground today without recognition of the likely irreversible impacts on wildlife.
- It's inconsistent to sign off on a growth management chapter (as the second highest priority) without any mention of the importance of the rate of growth.
- It's inconsistent to claim that this new draft has established a strong monitoring program that will offer increased accountability and predictability, when the baseline figures for indicators haven't even been identified yet. (How will we know how we're doing in the future if we never even had a starting point?) This is across the board in all chapters.
- It's inconsistent to have the housing goals in the plan without more meaningful consideration of significantly reducing commercial development potential. (Isn't it better to take proactive steps to reduce the demand for more residential housing, rather than always resorting to building more and more houses?)
- It's inconsistent to say that we will have a more predictable plan than the one we have now, given that the draft today (particularly without the accompanying Future Land Use Plan section) has far less detail and context to use in drafting land development regulations.

Again, we expect, because you have already had hearings, discussions, and taken votes on many of these topics, that elected officials should now address these topics.

This leads me to the last point,

Regarding the reference to a "final vote" in the staff report, we think it is absolutely critical to provide additional clarification. Are you assuming that just the themes and policies section of the plan – the part you have reviewed so far – could stand alone as a replacement of our existing Comp Plan? And that you would take an official vote now? Where does the Future Land Use Plan figure in? It's clear when you read the draft that many of the major decisions are still ahead in the FLUP review. The Conservation Alliance strongly believes the part of the plan you are currently reviewing cannot be a substitute for the existing plan. Without the FLUP, the themes and policies section should not stand alone. So again, please provide direction to staff on your expectations of how the FLUP will be reviewed with respect to final voting/adoption of the overall plan. This is a very important outstanding question.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.