

Chuckanut Ridge/Fairhaven Highlands Scoping Response Meeting
hosted by the
Coalition of Southside Neighborhoods
January 7, 2008

Purpose: The purpose of the gathering was to formulate a unified CSN response to the city's request for input into the scoping for the EIS on the Chuckanut Ridge property. A recent history for the proposed project and the property would be provided as well as an overview of the proposal in order to outline the issues. The goal is to form a committee with representation from each neighborhood to draft a letter of unified response on behalf of the five neighborhoods. Several handouts were made available to 45+ attendees.

History: Dr. Frank James explained that in the early 80s, at the very end of a City Council meeting for which there are no records, and with no public process, the property was up-zoned. Over the years, unbuildable acres were donated to the city and to the Whatcom Land Trust with presumed tax advantages to the owners. Throughout this time citizens have consistently voiced concern about the consequences of developing this property. Letitia Wheeler, who did the draft EIS for the previous owners, now works for Responsible Development as a consultant. She will provide definitive comments on the current EIS process. The proposal from the mid 90s was withdrawn and the City made an offer on the property that was so low a purchase was not accomplished. Over the years, as well, trenches have been dug to redirect and drain wetlands, impacting the environmental structure. The last public meeting held about the current proposal had hundreds of citizens attend in protest of developing this property in this way. Responsible Development has hired a highly qualified land-use attorney, David Brickland, as this all will likely end up in litigation despite ongoing efforts to avoid this.

Dr. Bob Gibb recalled that in 1996 the City was overwhelmed with the turnout of concerned citizens. Not long after this, the then owner abandoned his plans and sold the property to the current owners.

Timeline: Brad Rose explained the timeline. After the large, contentious public meeting for this proposal, a development application was submitted and deemed complete in an unusually short period of time. Then, the project

was put on hold for two years. When they decided to go forward the new Planning Director, Tim Stewart, declared that an EIS would be required. However, when contracted for, the commitment was made to the lowest bidder (recommended by the developer) offering the least complete evaluation. They are intending to only use materials they already have from previous work done in this area with a one-day site visit. When the initial draft is complete, there will be another public input period and from that there will be a final draft that will outline what is possible for this proposed development.

The scoping is a part of the process where any and everyone has the opportunity to say what ought to be included in the EIS evaluation. If these things are not included, then there is an opportunity to formally object to the EIS.

Dr James pointed out that impacts could include, for neighbors near by, things like blasting, heavy trucks, air pollution, lights, and related construction traffic for the 10 to 15 years of the construction itself. In addition, during this time those downhill from the site may experience drainage and other water related issues.

Dr. John McLaughlin pointed out that another important issue often ignored is the nature of the impacts off site. He emphasized that for the scoping, we need to point out impacts and harm both on and off site including adjacent wetlands, flooding problems (specifically in the mobile home park and Iris Lane), and the interruption of wildlife habitat by the disruption of what is now a fully connected ecosystem. Such interruption can lead to eliminating species from this and adjacent areas. He suggested that the validity and adequacy of the existing documentation that they intend to use must be examined and questions raised.

During the following discussion numerous points of concern were identified including the following:

- What are the needs of each species considered, and what are the impacts of isolating them due to the proposed development?
- The scope should rectify flawed or inadequate former information and ensure that what is used is proper and complete.

- Landslides have occurred on this site in the past and the situation may be aggravated by the proposed development
- The traffic implications are huge and many faceted; this needs to be studied more thoroughly
- The development will be inappropriately subsidized by citizens through taxation
- There are other South Neighborhood and citywide impacts related to the bridge, crime etc.
- The question of “best use” of land should be raised, especially given that the South Neighborhood has already presented an alternative location near existing infrastructure to absorb the dwellings that this proposed development could provide
- There needs to be consideration of the future of Bellingham, 50 to 100 years from now—where will people recreate? The city has proposed many acres of new parkland in this area, where better to put it than on undeveloped land that is the home to critical areas?
- A traffic connector to 24th Street is a part of the city’s transportation plan indicating the developer will provide this, yet it is not on the proposal nor does it seem environmentally feasible. What is the traffic impact on roads (and the interurban trail) with and without the connector? What about the provision of emergency services? A serious traffic analysis is severely lacking

Dave Pros pointed out that the county will soon be considering reducing the projected population numbers for the city which would reduce the perceived need to provide so much additional housing quickly.

There was consensus that the issues raised are valid and acceptable and that a committee should be formed and move forward to create a document for the scoping on behalf of CSN.

- Michael Lilliquist will represent Fairhaven Neighbors
- John Hymas will represent Happy Valley Neighborhood Association
- Christopher Grannis will represent the South Neighborhood

- Larry Horowitz will represent the Edgemoor Neighborhood
- The South Hill Neighborhood Association will choose their representative at their meeting later in the week.

The committee will get together and work and get results back to the neighborhood presidents as soon as possible for consensus approval, through the neighborhoods, for submission before the January 23, 2008 deadline.

Everyone is encouraged to come with friends and neighbors on the 16th!

Everyone is encouraged to write letters by the 23rd!

Pam Went
CSN Steering Committee member