



Bonner County
Board of Commissioners

Brian Domke

Asia Williams

Ron Korn

Special Meeting Minutes

Planning Workshop

Date: July 31, 2025
Location: 1500 Hwy 2, Suite 338
Sandpoint, ID 83864
Convene at: 9:00 AM

COMMISSIONERS: Domke – Present Williams – Present Korn – Present
OTHERS PRESENT: Jacob Gabell, Allan Songstad, Dave Frankenbach, Matt Linscott,
Eric Hidden, Don Davis

Purpose/Topic Summary: Planning Workshop for Files AM0007-24 & AM0004-25

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Commissioner Williams called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Discussion was had on how much time would be spent on each file that is being heard today to accommodate all the anticipated public comments.

A brief recess was taken to fix some technical issues.

Reconvened at 9:13 a.m.

Discussion of the proposed update to the Land Use Component of the Comprehensive Plan with the associated Comprehensive Plan Map, as drafted by the Planning Commission and found in planning file AM0007-24. Jake said he has nothing new to report but briefly discussed some additional timeline information requested by one of the commissioners. Commissioner Domke asked for these file maps to be brought up on screen so everyone can visualize what is being talked about. Jake said there will be some updates to some numbers that come out in a report later this week.

Commissioner Domke said he has four points to touch on. He is concerned about mixed use. He does not believe that these two uses (residential and industrial) should coexist. He also shared concerns about nonconforming land use. He said he wants to be confident that the board is not creating new issues they don't currently recognize. Issues with how much access many of these parcels have is a concern of his as well. Many only have one point of access as they are on dead end roads. Commissioner Domke also discussed isolated map use designations. Said these can create islands of inconsistency in certain areas.

Commissioner Williams said she would like to receive definitions and examples of some of the terms used in these files. That would help buyers know exactly what kind of land they're looking at and would mitigate confusion. Commissioner Korn agreed with what both commissioners said.

Commissioner Domke asked if the planning department had any comments on the four points he made. Allan Songstad said he thinks the commissioners need to make a clear distinction between zoning and a comp plan. He said a lot of the definitions being talked about go in zoning, and this workshop is for the comp plan. He talked about looking at certain parts of the county and figuring out a good place to allocate as industrial. He said anomalies exist all over the county that are zoned oddly. Allan said that some roads may not have many access routes, but this is a plan for the future. He said you can find many areas around the county zoned as Rural 5 that do not have multiple access points.

Commissioner Williams said having solid definitions will be more helpful because things can be interpreted very differently from person to person. Not having hard definitions opens these things up for multiple interpretations and creates issues where two people see the same issue very differently. Allan said that the planning department is trying to work on zoning but they don't know what the commissioners are going to do, so it's difficult. If the commissioners change the comprehensive plan, the planning department in turn has to change zoning.

Lengthy discussion followed regarding Commissioner Domke's four points. Commissioner Williams said there are inconsistencies when speaking about these areas. Sometimes they are looked at in one way, sometimes they are looked at in other ways, and it's creating confusion. She asked how the department and board looks at today's vision, while also keeping the future's vision in mind. Dave Frankenbach talked about the visions for the future and how different language can better help decisions be made in the future. Discussion followed regarding the comp plan and zoning verbiage. Dave said the county wouldn't want to put a 5-acre development at the end of a skinny road as it would create a lot of traffic and would cause lots of congestion issues. Discussion followed regarding definitions and verbiage.

Matt Linscott talked about the multiple points of entry and where that is required.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dave Bowman – He suggested a glossary of terms be put in the implementation process. He asked how it is known where land use requirements should be placed. He believes a heavy industrial land use designation should be created. He agrees with the planning commissioners regarding the egress and ingress situation. He believes these things should be reviewed annually. Says the code was deliberately changed because of issues they were having, and he believes this should be undone.

Theresa Hiesener – Believes multiple points of entry are important. Discussed ADUs and how she is unhappy with the rules that have been put in place.

Jonna Plante – Said nonconforming laws have been used a lot for the Linscott gravel pit. She said this is used for protection, she would like protection now for growth. She said the comp plan is trying to change mixed use. Discussed the gravel pit. She would like all mixed use laws to stay what they are.

Wayne Martin – Thanked the commissioners for their time. Grandfather laws are causing issues. He is concerned about not having multiple points of entry and exit for fire safety. The board is putting the citizens at risk by allowing them to build and ignore safety regulations.

Susan Drumheller – Said multiple points of exit and entry are necessary with increased fire hazards. She suggested making everything in that area ag/forest, and leaving small areas already

developed as nonconforming. Agreed with Dave Bowman to create a glossary of terms for these items. Suggested bringing in others from the community with expertise for what is needed in these areas. Encouraged county to reevaluate the comp plan every six months, as state statute allows.

Monica Gunter – Appreciates what Commissioner Domke said in the beginning of the meeting. The comp plan should be followed “to the T.” Discussed Northern Lights in Sagle and Linscott as an example of zoning issues. Said mixed use land can destroy Rural 5 areas. Asked the board to not change the area into mixed use.

Discussion of the proposed update to the Implementation Component of the Comprehensive Plan, as drafted by the Planning Commission and found in planning file AM0004-25. Jake discussed workshops and hearings that have been held for these files thus far. The vast majority of changes are expansions of policies.

Implementation Section. Jake talked about three new policies to be implemented. Commissioner Domke talked about policy 3. Don discussed they used a scientific approach and GIS; it was done in house. He discussed the road issue and homes located behind a RR track. He wondered if there should be a budget line for the comp plan so that they could hire consultants. Commissioner Williams agreed, there should be a line item for this so they can have these evaluations, this could help in litigation. Don said these are issues that are being had statewide. There are a lot of consulting firms around the state getting into these issues, so they have some options if they want to talk to one of them.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Susan Drumheller – Said that people have abused the system for land use changes. Recommended that a policy be added to limit the number of comp plan amendments. It became a habit that amendments were made anytime someone came in for a zone change. She wants to maintain the integrity of the comp plan.

Wayne Martin – Talked about policy 2. He recommended taking sections of the comp plan and going over those once a year. At that time, that is when changes to the comp plan can be requested.

Karen Kelly – Questioned changes to comp plan only every six months. Had questions about if changes are denied.

Theresa Hiesener – She supports a zoning enforcement program. She says people come to Idaho and think they can do whatever they want, and it’s causing problems.

Dave Bowman – Agrees that a review every six months would be appropriate.

Property Rights Section. Don Davis said there is distinction in changes to the map as opposed to changes to the language on the map. He said that if the state statute states something plainly, do they need to restate it in comp plan. If statute changes, then they would need to change the comp plan. Dave Frankenbach said he wonders about the practicality of only allowing map amendments on a certain timeline. He said there is a lot of work involved in a map amendment as multiple hearings need to be scheduled and such. If they had to save them all up to be heard at once, how practical would it be? Commissioner Williams asked how you manage when people don’t have the right for the change, but they have the right to make the request. She said if the

comp plan is constantly reviewed and kept updated, they should have fewer requests for these kinds of changes because the comp plan will be up to date at almost all times.

Commissioner Domke discussed the language in the comp plan and how the county is not singling out individual parcels in these areas. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Domke talked about goals and objectives and the verbiage in that section, possibly changing it. Commissioner Williams said she believes the verbiage is generic enough to encompass the full surrounding area and possible impacts. Discussion followed regarding what should be included in the staff report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dave Bowman – Said these policies pretty much conform to LUPA currently.

Theresa Hiesener – Agrees with impacts on other properties.

Commissioner Williams said the board has been given direction that they need to change how they are doing things and they need to follow those directions.

Population Section. Commissioner Williams said she sees the value of having budgeted funds for this data because it is beneficial. Don said they have never used population data to make decisions, but it is nice data to have and to consider. He would not suggest putting a lot of money toward getting population data because he has not seen it make a huge impact on decisions in rural areas. Commissioner Williams said that population can play a role when it comes to schools in the area. Discussion followed regarding population effects.

Commissioner Domke suggested amending this section. Dave Frankenbach said there are two other sections that he thinks would be more appropriate to amend – the schools section and the public utilities section. Commissioner Domke talked about striking policy 2 from this section. Commissioner Williams said then they would have to strike policy 1 as well. Discussion followed regarding analyzing population density. Don said that just because something is written in the comp plan, there is no mandate that it must be done. Commissioner Williams said this section requires them to actively do something, not passively do something. Commissioner Domke said he does not want to say they will do something if that is not the county's intent. Discussion followed regarding how schools determine population impact. Commissioner Williams said she would agree to amending this section.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dave Bowman – Thinks this section is well written. The county should be analyzing population. The reason the county has a planning department is for them to work with other agencies to collaborate effectively. He thinks everything should be left in this section.

Theresa Hiesener – Said no population analyzation will be accurate with the current ADUs. Urged the board to adhere to the policies in the comp plan.

School Facilities section. Commissioner Domke said he agrees with most of the things in this section. However, the school does not provide a transportation system, they provide a transportation service. Discussion followed on the difference in terms. Commissioner Williams suggested striking the language. Commissioner Korn said he can see that schools could not be doing their job appropriately and putting the work on the county. If the school is not accepting

growth appropriately, then any growth in the county will negatively impact that school. Commissioner Williams said they will change the word “systems” to “services.”

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

Economic Development section. Commissioner Domke suggested adding some of the verbiage from objective 3 to objective 2, as well as to policy 5 -- “while protecting the surrounding areas from adverse impacts.” Dave Frankenbach said he has concerns about adding that language to policy 5. He suggested breaking policy 5 into two separate sentences. Discussion followed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Theresa Hiesener – Defining policies is very important because there are different interpretations for everything.

Susan Drumheller – This would be a good section to adopt a land use designation policy for industrial and high-intensity commercial uses. Suggested possibly extending policy 3 to include more.

Dave Bowman – He does not think splitting policy 5 up would accomplish what the board intends.

Suzanne Glasoe – The policy needs to say differently as there are private campgrounds popping up.

Land Use section. Commissioner Domke suggested adding language to policy 4 regarding buffering. He does not agree with policy 5 as he feels it makes the map designation void. Commissioner Williams agreed and asked that it be removed. Matt said that the language allows other things in the use table to be conditionally permitted. Commissioner Domke said that impacts that cannot be fully mitigated and the language is very restrictive. Lengthy discussion followed.

Dave Frankenbach said he has a big problem with what is being suggested. If they remove policy 5, the board has just deemed farm stands in ag/forest area illegal. Lengthy discussion followed. Commissioner Williams asked if this policy allows people a loophole to get around something the map does not allow. Discussion followed. Commissioner Domke said that reviews must be diligent so things that are unwanted are not allowed. Don Davis discussed how other policies support and protect policy 5.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dave Bowman – Said no one is wrong in what they are saying. Said people will try to use this as a backdoor to do what they want. It is a language problem. He suggested revising both policy 4 and 5.

Commissioner Domke suggested revising policy 7 as well, adding “and public water system” to the end. The planning commission said that “sanitary services” does include water.

Commissioner Williams suggested doing a continuation due to time constraints.

Matt suggested putting in revisions to vocalize that these policies are “as of today,” as this document is set to be a 20-year document and could change in 5-10 years’ time.

Susan Drumheller – Suggested adding or changing verbiage to various policies.

Natural Resources section. Commissioner Domke suggested slight verbiage changes to policy 5.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Susan Drumheller – Requested wildlife corridors be added to policy 3. Said policy 6 has unclear language on what area is being referred to.

Commissioner Williams confirmed that critical wildlife habitat is determined by Fish and Game. Jake said these are determined by endangered species and they do have access to those maps. Discussion followed regarding wildlife habitat in Bonner County. Commissioner Williams suggested changing the verbiage to add who identifies critical wildlife habitat. Jake said they have had difficulty mapping wildlife corridors in the county. Don said Fish and Game said the animals are here, everywhere. There are no distinct migratory paths through the county, which makes it difficult to dictate distinct wildlife corridors.

A continuation for this workshop will be determined at a later time. Allan said this workshop has been incredibly helpful. He said there is difficulty moving forward on zoning without direction from the board. Lengthy discussion followed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

Deputy Clerk: *Lauren Reichenbach*