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Comment for Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners
Proposed Change to Pend Oreille County Future Land Use Map

Susan Hobbs

For over a decade I've worked behind the scenes and in the public eye as a citizen volunteer for the Pend Oreille County Planning Commission.

I considered my role to help the County avoid unintended consequences.

Former members Kelly Curtis & Steve Kiss went before the BOCC to recommend me after years of benefiting from the information I brought to the table; information that was always respectfully offered.

The first time the PC ever heard the term keyholing or funnel development, where a single waterfront lot is used not for a residence, but as portal to funnel an off-waterfront population onto a water body, it was by research I conducted on their behalf. It was by research that we all learned of these things together.

Riparian areas another one - Shielding lights to protect the night sky, yet another.

The first Power Point I ever put together was for the Planning Commission. It was horrible ;)

And after I was seated on the PC - as a body, we made mistakes, none on a grand scale, none you'd call precedent setting, but still bothersome.

I remember one, a Diamond Lake shoreline project that brought before us some polished presenters. The PC was wowed - best drawings ever, by professionals in suits, all very impressive.

It passed, but in reflection perhaps it shouldn't have.

Afterward I hoped to learn how to weigh projects so contacted agencies to get their 2c. I asked Jeff Lawlor of Fish & Wildlife - "How do you weigh these projects?"

He gave me a piece of guidance I never forgot - You weigh them on their own merit of course, but giving equal footing to the question of "what if everyone did what they propose?"

In N. County, where still-available lots and homes sit on the market, sometimes for years, sometimes for decades, where the only pressure to develop must be

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cultivated, if the County forwards this application, the precedent will make it far more difficult if not impossible to say no elsewhere.

Any working farm or forestland closer to existing population will cite this decision, making that future project, that farm or forestland more prone to fragmentation. If Pend Oreille County does the Wasatch Associates a favor by compounding *their* wealth building, *their* investment value, it will be at the expense of Pend Oreille County itself, rural character, habitat, quality of life, and existing citizens. And it's economically disadvantageous as well. Agricultural and forestland costs 31c for every dollar of tax revenue earned. A residence? \$1.21 (American Farmland Trust).

The Department of Commerce, the entity charged with training planning commissions in every jurisdiction, has sent POC a letter opposing this project as incompatible with the GMA and our own Development Regulations. They know the importance of safeguarding NR land for the future.

Jurisdictions throughout the nation, including Utah, the State of Washington and in individual counties are increasingly aware that Natural Resource land capable of food production for future generations must be spared conversion to higher density use, *unless there's no alternative.*

Watching the news, it's obvious there's a philosophical and political unrest in our nation, in our state - E vs W, R vs L - we all recognize it. By imposing regulations from afar, the perception (right or wrong) here is that Olympia doesn't trust local jurisdictions to have the vision, the big picture awareness or sophistication to make sound decisions locally. Will we be proving them right?

This is an opportunity to demonstrate that our regulations truly define our values. An opportunity to demonstrate that we grasp the importance of NR lands, of rural culture, of ranching. This is an opportunity to show we aren't so stubborn as to cut off our nose to spite our face forwarding a proposal that creates un-needed building lots in the most rural part of our rural county.

I respectfully, we *all* respectfully ask that you choose to favor Pend Oreille County's future by recommending denial of this proposal.

Sincerely,
Susan Hobbs
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