

MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY SPECIAL MEETING

April 11, 2007

The Commissioners met in special session in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington, on Wednesday, April 11, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. Commissioners Al Carter, Bob Beerbower and Mike Wilson were present. Also in attendance was Donna Caton, Clerk of the Board and Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney James Baker.

As required under the *Open Public Meetings Act*, this meeting was announced to the local media at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Chairman Carter stated the purpose of the meeting was to meet requirements of RCW 36.70.795 to hear public comments related to Ordinance No. 357 establishing a moratorium in the Wildcat Aquifer area near the City of McCleary. This moratorium was imposed by the County Commissioners due to the concern that accelerated growth prior to adequate aquifer protection studies could endanger this sole-source aquifer through excessive depletion and contamination.

The moratorium was imposed to allow adequate time to research the facts. The public hearing is to gather information to declare findings that may or may not lead to some relaxation of the moratorium.

Chairman Carter asked for public comments:

Janis Aaron Moore, McCleary, supported sustainable development without sacrificing the environment and the continuation of the moratorium for at least the six months. She discussed piece-meal decisions that may have impacted the aquifer, the City of McCleary Water Plan, and her concerns about the objectivity of Grays Harbor County Planning Commission. She read a statement in a letter from Brian Shea, County Planning Director, supporting individual property rights and protection of the aquifer. Ms. Moore urged the use of best available science on assessing the water supply and encouraged updating the Grays Harbor County Comprehensive Plan. She submitted handouts.

Steve Garlick, McCleary, owns 7 acres that he short platted just prior to the moratorium. He has developed wells, covenants, road approaches, surveys, and parcel addresses for each lot. The moratorium has been a serious hardship. He believes that the county already has checks and balances in place to protect the aquifer and would like to see the moratorium lifted, but studies to continue on the aquifer.

Wallace Bentley, Mayor of McCleary, read a written statement, enclosed as an attachment to these minutes.

Terri Franklin, Elma, stated that she thinks the shallow portion of aquifer is at risk, but would like to see those that currently have projects to be allowed to proceed.

Tim Hamilton, Elma-Hicklin Road, said he is proud that multiple jurisdictions were able to meet and work on these issues. There are wells running dry and we can learn by mistakes made in the Puget Sound, but need time to work on the problems. He urged moving forward using best technology and supports the moratorium.

Laurie Mansmith, McCleary, discussed that when she considered living here, she first tasted the water. She tries to be responsible about water use. Some residents have problems with wells and septic systems, and she said that they should be able to do something. She supports the moratorium and appreciates the efforts of the county.

Kent Morrison, Summit Lake, is in the process of building a house near McCleary. He has gone through the process of a short plat and spent \$150,000 to this point. He has a permit to build his own home, but not on the other six parcels. He is concerned about good water and discussed the use of dye tests to determine impacts of old septic systems. He stated that wells are going dry and well drillers suggest going to a deeper level for adequate water. He noted that a trailer was brought in illegally and that the county needs to follow-up on these violations. He asked for allowances for those people that are in the process of developing.

Dee Harrington, Elma-Hicklin Road, is fifth generation of the area. She believes in intelligent development and that we currently do not have adequate impact controls, especially relating to traffic. At the public informational meeting, she learned that we don't know how much water there is or where it comes from. Until we have answers, she agrees with the moratorium.

Ken Brogan, Developer in the Prairie (McCleary area), stated he is the first to do a big project in the area and worked well with the City and County. His company employed a geologist to develop a water aquifer protection plan. His company owns property on Elma-Hicklin Road. He discussed the amount he has invested to date and amounts spent on studies and fees. He explained that he hears the concerns of citizens and is one of the people that have the ability to adjust his application to a lower density, to 5 acre lots (clustering called for 4 houses per lot). His company has projects in five counties, and his goal is to get this one done and assist in responsible development.

Everette Challstad, Elma-Hicklin Road, owns five acres in moratorium area. He stated his appreciation that the county and city are working together. At the informational meeting he learned that we don't know much about the aquifer and agrees that we should complete the study to assess the aquifer. He supported some relief to those that have applications in place, but expressed concern with clustered development.

Janis Moore, McCleary, spoke regarding the development hearing before the Planning Commission on Feb. 6, 2007 and mentioned language that stated “special use permit to take 20 acres of land and use in a cluster and that open land will be frozen unless it’s changed”. What does that mean? Developer said he is going to build 320 houses, and this greatly exceeds current zoning. She supported some abeyance for single family homes on 5 acres.

Chairman Carter closed the public hearing. He stated that the Commissioners will take all information in to consideration and will discuss with legal department and staff development that was in the process when the moratorium was imposed. He assured the public that they would move along as quickly as possible, as they do not want to create financial hardships. The Commissioners want to move forward in a manner that is good for the area and good for the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
for Grays Harbor County
this _____ day of _____, 2007

ALBERT A. CARTER, Chairman

BOB BEERBOWER, Commissioner, District 1

MIKE WILSON, Commissioner, District 2

ATTEST:

Donna Caton
Clerk of the Board