

**GRANT COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Chairman: Bill Bailey
 Vice Chairman:
 Board Members: Carol Dawson, Terry Dorsing, Ann Drader, Blair Fuglie and Kevin Richards
 Secretary: Doris Long

COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM - GRANT COUNTY COURTHOUSE, EPHRATA, WASHINGTON

SEPTEMBER 13, 2017 @ 7:00 P.M.

2017 Attendance

NAME	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
BAILEY	P P	NM	P	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	P			
DAWSON	A A	NM	P	NM	NM	A P	NM	NM	P			
DORSING	P P	NM	A	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	P			
DRADER	A P	NM	P	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	P			
FLEMING	P P	NM	P	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	Mr. Fleming Resigned 08/2017			
FUGLIE	P P	NM	P	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	P			
RICHARDS	P P	NM	P	NM	NM	P P	NM	NM	P			

P=Present

A=Absent

C=Canceled

NM=No Meeting Held

Chairman, Bill Bailey, opens the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Board Action:

Approval of June 21, 2017 Planning Commission Meeting.

ACTION: Terry Dorsing moves to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Blair Fuglie seconds the motion. Voted on and passes unanimously.

It is decided that the vacant Vice-Chairman position, created by the resignation of Mr. Jim Fleming, will not be filled until the 7th Planning Commission position has been filled.

Mr. Fuglie would like to take a moment to acknowledge Mr. Fleming for his 20 years of dedicated service.

Mr. Bailey explains the Public Visioning Workshop is to discuss the 2018 Comprehensive Plan update, and that the update provides the opportunity and means to keep the development applicable to the area as it changes.

Planning Director, Damien Hooper, introduces those present in the audience.

Eric Pentico – Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Lyle Stoltman – Grant County Conservation District

Cathy Potter – Port of Royal Slope

Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting, is presenting an Agricultural Lands Designation Memo, and associated mapping, as well as a PowerPoint Visioning presentation.

Mr. Floyd explains in the past a lot of rangeland was classified as AG land. He reads through the Agricultural Lands Designation Memo pointing out the different areas that were addressed.

Agricultural Resource Land Considerations

Grant County is required to implement a comprehensive plan under RCW 36.70A.040. As part of this requirement, "the county...shall designate critical areas, agricultural lands, forestlands, and mineral resource lands, and adopt

development regulations conserving these designated agricultural lands, forestlands, and mineral resource lands and protecting these designated critical areas”.

Agricultural land is defined as **“land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees..., finfish in upland hatcheries, or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production”**.

In Grant County this is the land that is in AG production, is expected to stay in AG production, and helps support the AG economy.

Long-term commercial significance “includes the **growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land**.”

A lot of the land that was designated as AG in the past, and is subject to reclassification, has limited growing capacity, limited productivity, lack of soil due to it being scabland, and is not irrigated.

Classification/Designation Approach

“Counties must approach the effort as a county-wide or area-wide process. Counties...should not review resource lands designations solely on a parcel-by-parcel process. Counties...must have a program for the transfer or purchase of development rights prior to designating agricultural resource lands in urban growth areas.

WAC 365-190 spells out the criteria a county must use to classify AG lands. This WAC was strictly followed. The re-classification update must be applied county-wide.

Development Regulations

Counties “must adopt development regulations that assure the conservation of agricultural resource lands”. Grant County has adopted regulations to meet this guideline; these regulations are coded in Grant County Code (GCC) Chapter 23.04.

Grant County already has development regulations in place, so it will basically be an updated designation as to where those regulations apply within the County.

Designation Factors

Lands should be considered for designation as agricultural resource lands based on three factors:” 1) specifically is not characterized by urban growth, 2) is used or is capable of being used for agricultural production, and 3) has long-term commercial significance for agriculture.

Urban Growth

Lands should be considered for agricultural resource designation if “the land is not already characterized by urban growth”.

The Urban Growth Areas and City Limits can be ignored.

Production Capability

The NRCS land-capability classification divides soil types into 8 classes. Classes 1 through 4 are generally suitable for cultivation, while Classes 5 to 8 are generally not suitable for cultivation. However, with certain types of land management, Classes 5 to 7 could be used for agriculture (Duncan, 2017). Classes are different for the same soil type for irrigated and non-irrigated lands. An analysis was done using Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) agricultural land use data to determine land that is irrigated; data includes crop type, acreage, and irrigation type. Land not noted as irrigated in the WSDA data is assumed to be non-irrigated.

An evaluation was done to determine where the urban growth is going to occur, and the location of the land that has production capability. Natural Resource Conservation Service maps were consulted that demonstrated soil classifications

and soil suitability. A Washington State Department of Agriculture survey was also consulted, which provided information such as crop types.

Long-Term Commercial Significance

Lands should be considered for agricultural resource designation if “the land has long-term commercial significance for agriculture”. As part of determining this, counties should consider classification of prime and unique farmland soils, availability of public facilities including roads used in transporting agricultural products, tax status, public service availability, proximity to urban growth areas, predominant parcel size, land use settlement patterns, intensity of nearby land uses, history of nearby land development permits, land values under alternative uses, and proximity to markets.

Water Availability/Precipitation

One of the main considerations in Grant County for long-term commercial significance is water availability. Water availability can either come from irrigation or precipitation. If there is insufficient water available, lands cannot be commercially significant in the long-term.

Precipitation is not as applicable in Grant County due to the irrigation water provided. Although, there are pockets of dryland farming. Any land that is irrigated, or expected to be irrigated in the future, will be considered as long term commercial significance.

Parcel Size

Agricultural lands must be large enough in area to have long-term commercial significance. Parcels were categorized into various sizes – less than 10 acres, between 10 and 20 acres, between 20 and 40 acres, and over 40 acres. Larger acreages are assumed to be needed to be long-term commercially significant, acknowledging that smaller acreages may be adequate for certain high value crops such as tree fruits or wine grape vineyards. County land use designations for smaller parcels allow for development of these higher value crops, as desired.

Other things considered were parcel size, if located within or near UGAs, and permanent crops versus row crops.

Land in CRP or Conservation Land

Land in CRP or conservation land may or may not mean that land has long-term commercial significance. In some cases, land may return from CRP or conservation and have long-term commercial significance; in other cases, the land is in CRP or conservation because it is not viable to farm the land.

The history of the land was considered. If it is, or had been in a conservation reserve program. Would it stay in the program or would it go back in to production. The hope is to work closely with the Conservation District through the reclassification process.

Prime Farmlands

Some farmlands are designated as farmland of statewide importance or farmland of unique importance. Statewide important and unique important farmland are reviewed with previous elements listed to determine if any areas should be designated as agricultural resource land or removed from designation.

Areas north of Hartline, east of Moses Lake, east of Mattawa, and south of Warden are noted as farmlands of statewide importance. Many areas are not prime farmland, including areas north of Quincy, north of Soap Lake, southwest of Wilson Creek, south of Coulee City, and east of Ephrata.

Food Security

“Counties may consider food security issues, which may include providing local food supplies for food banks, schools and institutions, vocational training opportunities in agricultural operations, and preserving heritage or artisanal foods. Grant County does not explicitly consider food security issues as Grant County is a net exporter of agriculture, however this element was reviewed to ensure food security is not a concern for the area.

Food security was considered only due to it being a requirement to do so.

Sufficiency

“The process should result in designating an amount of agricultural resource lands sufficient to maintain and enhance the economic viability of the agricultural industry in the county over the long term; and to retain supporting agricultural businesses, such as processors, farm suppliers, and equipment maintenance and repair facilities”

This is to ensure that there is enough designated AG land to sustain the economy in the County. All of the land that is currently in production is maintaining the AG designation.

Local Importance

“Counties...may further classify additional agricultural lands of local importance. Classifying additional agricultural lands of local importance should include, in addition to general public involvement, consultation with the board of the local conservation district and the local committee of the farm service agency”

The American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) are important to the economy, and are being recognized as such.

Mr. Bailey comments that viticulture utilizes some unusual soil types and terrain, and when water is available, could become an important use of agricultural land.

Mr. Richards comments that there is a lot of movement just east of the East Low Canal that should be taken into consideration. There is a transaction currently being worked out that would allow water to be available.

Mr. Dorsing comments that there is a lot of that on the Royal Slope, in the Frenchman Hills area, as well. A lot of the land that did not have water before, but now has it available, is becoming prime vineyard ground.

Mr. Floyd states that they may need to do a follow up meeting with the Irrigation Districts, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Water Conservancy Board.

Findings and Conclusions

Using the information presented in the previous sections, multiple areas in the County may be considered for reclassification. In general, it is important to maintain continuity in agricultural resource land designation; unless there are sufficient reasons that the agricultural resource land should be de-designated, land should remain as agricultural resource land to protect the resource. Therefore, many areas that may not be as suitable as agricultural land may remain within agricultural resource land designation due to its proximity to lands of other types.

As each of these factors were looked at it appeared that a lot of rangeland was classified inaccurately as AG. A new Rural Resource designation is being proposed. It would have a similar development density as AG land.

There is discussion regarding the Rural Resource designation.

Additionally, there are many areas that have potential to be added or removed from designation in some analyses but not others. For example, there are areas east-northeast of Mattawa that are located in an AVA and have large parcel sizes. However, these areas require management to be suitable, are not currently farmed, and are not prime farmland. It does not appear appropriate to include these areas as agricultural resource lands.

The areas that should be removed from agricultural resource land designation are areas north of Quincy in the Beezley Hills area, north of Soap Lake and south of Coulee City in the Dry Falls area, areas around Wilson Creek in the Black Rock/Wilson Creek area, and areas east-northeast of Mattawa in the Saddle Mountain/Mattawa area.

Areas that should be added to agricultural resource land designation are areas east of Mattawa and north of Coulee City.

Approximately 314,500 acres are proposed to be changed to Rural Resource from agricultural resource land.

Table 1
Agricultural Resource Lands Proposed Additions

Name	Area (acres)	Previous Land Use Designation	Reason(s) for Addition
Dry Falls Area	510	Open Space	Currently farmed and irrigated, suitable capability, in AVA
Dry Falls Area	27	Rural Residential 2	Currently farmed and irrigated, suitable capability, in AVA
Saddle Mountain/Mattawa Area	21	Rural Residential 1	Currently farmed and irrigated, suitable capability, in AVA
Saddle Mountain/Mattawa Area	1,466	Rural Remote	Currently farmed and irrigated, suitable capability, large parcel size, in AVA
Total area (acres)	2,024		

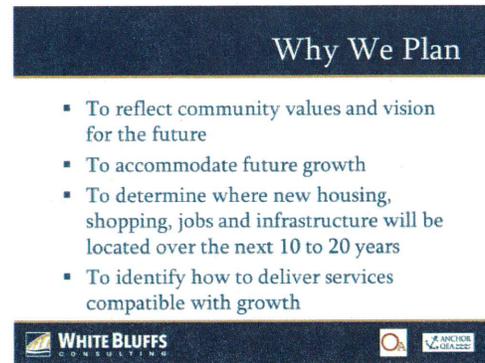
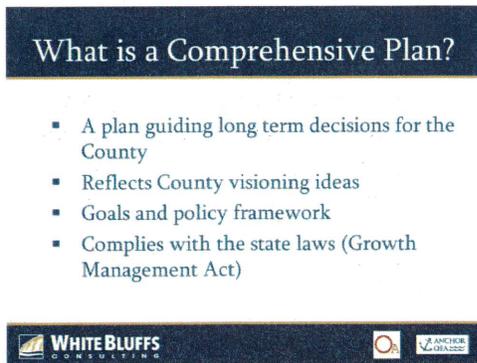
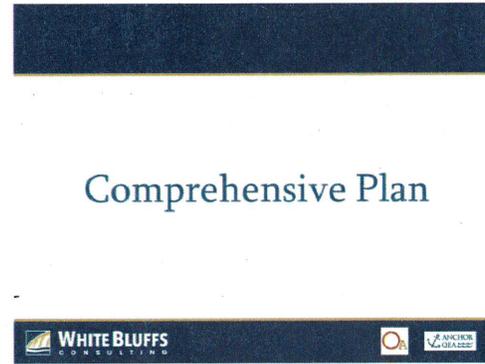
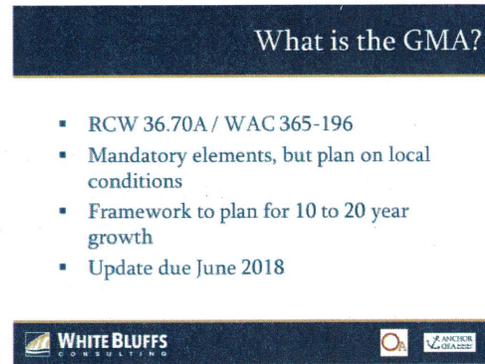
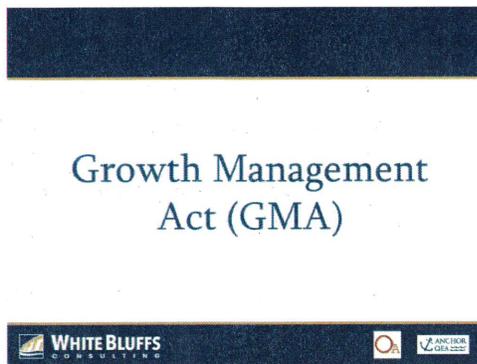
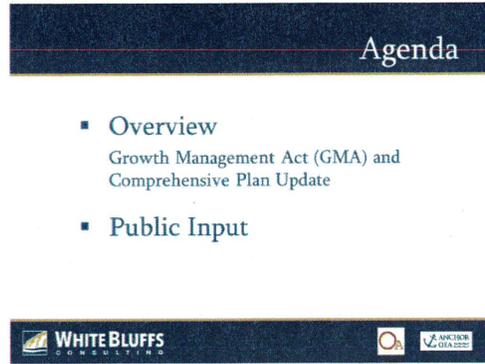
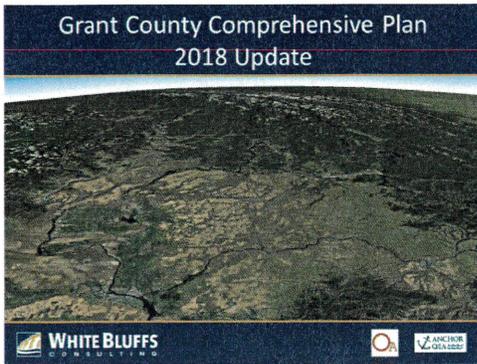
Table 2
Agricultural Resource Lands Proposed Removals

Name	Area (acres)	New Land Use Designation	Reason(s) for Removal
Beezley Hills Area	96,203	Rural Resource	Not currently farmed or irrigated, not suitable soil type without management, areas in conservation/CRP, not prime farmland
Black Rock/Wilson Creek Area	91,461	Rural Resource	Not currently farmed or irrigated, not suitable soil type without management, areas in conservation/CRP, not prime farmland
Dry Falls Area	58,537	Rural Resource	Not currently farmed or irrigated, not suitable soil type without management, areas in conservation/CRP, not prime farmland
Saddle Mountain/Mattawa Area	68,313	Rural Resource	Not currently farmed or irrigated, not suitable soil type without management
Total area (acres)	314,514		

Discussion takes place regarding the selection process used in deciding which parcels would be redesignated. The mapping is reviewed.

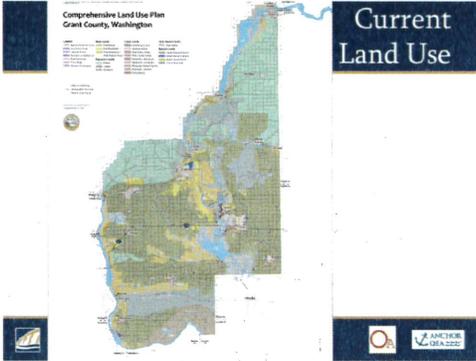
As a part of that discussion Mr. Hooper explains, in addition to the development density being similar, the uses in the Rural Resource designation should remain the same as in AG. Although, the Rural Resource designated land will not be handcuffed, as the AG land is, to the long-term commercial significance designation.

Mr. Floyd states that he will be moving on to the PowerPoint presentation. He encourages the Planning Commission to look over the information just reviewed, any questions can be addressed at Thursday's workshop. Mr. Floyd presents the following PowerPoint providing an overview of the information.



Current Comprehensive Plan Elements

- Economic Development
- Land Use
 - Urban Growth Areas/Lands
 - Rural Lands
 - Resource Lands
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation
- Capital Facilities



Current Land Use

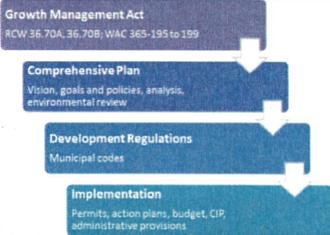


Current Comprehensive Plan Elements

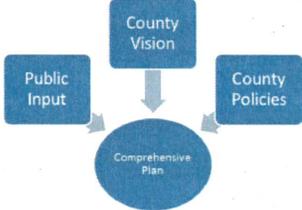
- Utilities
- Essential Public Facilities
- Intergovernmental Coordination



Plan Relationship with Other Documents



Plan Relationship with Other Documents



Expected Population Growth

- 2016 – Approximately 94,600
- Projected 2038 – Approximately 135,000
- Increase of 40,000
 - Urban areas increase – 22,000
 - Unincorporated increase – 18,000



Recent and Expected Trends

- Server farms in Quincy
- Strong agriculture markets
 - International/National
- Growth around Moses Lake, Mattawa and Quincy
- Regional recreation areas
- Resource management challenges



Public Input

Workshop process overview



What is a Vision

- What community members most value about the County
 - Shared image of what the County will become in the next 20 years
- Goals and policies are based on vision ideas

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Existing Vision Elements

The land and water are the lifeblood of Grant County. Our culture, customs, history, future, way of life and economy are dependent upon the land, the natural resources and an effective partnership empowering local stewardship of the land and its resources.

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Existing Vision Elements

- Respect for human dignity and equal opportunity
- Balanced growth and development in harmony with the environment
- Balance between too little and too much government
- Preservation and protection of the environment
- Protection of private property rights
- Economic development and prosperous communities, cities and towns
- Best use of the land

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Public Input

- What changes are happening in the County?
- What should the future direction look like?
- What elements of the plan might be outdated?
- What trends need to be included?



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Next Steps

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Timeline



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How to Stay Involved

Multiple ways to participate:

- Attend Planning Commission meetings
- Complete a survey
- Review draft documents and send comments
- Sign up for email updates
- Submit comments

Visit for updates:

http://www.grantcountywa.gov/planning/HTML/Comp_Plan_Update.htm

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Additional Questions/Comments?

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Mr. Dorsing comments that the County is mostly AG production with the various crops being sent out of the County for processing, but in the next 20 to 30 years there will be a shift. He feels more of the products grown in the County will stay local, and go through some type of finishing process to become accessible to the end user.

Mr. Richards asks about the Hirst decision, and the impact it may have on growth outside of city boundaries.

Mr. Hooper explains that the two major components used to reach the Hirst decision does not exist in Grant County. Therefore, the decision will not directly apply to Grant County the way it is written, but the Comp. Plan will include means to protect water resources.

There is further discussion regarding water availability.

Ms. Drader would like to see sites with cultural or historical value designated in some way, which would also benefit tourism.

Mr. Fuglie points out there has been substantial improvements made in establishing recreation areas along the Columbia River.

Mr. Richards comments that his concern is with the community of Larson as it is one of the poorest, economically disadvantaged areas, in the County. He is not sure how, or what can be done, but it should be noted.

Lyle Stoltman, Grant County Conservation District, explains his interest is with the agro tourism, and culture of the County, that is different from other areas.

Cathy Potter, Port of Royal Slope, reports one of the trends she notices in their area, with all of the new orchards going in, is the influx of H2A workers in the community.

Mr. Dorsing explains with the Ag industry, particularly the fruit industry, people are being brought in by the thousands to work for 6 to 10 months of the year. It is no longer for just a 3 or 6 week stint.

Mr. Hooper reports the State Department of Health is the permitting authority for the H2A program. The County is only asked if the proposed building meets the required setbacks for the zone it is located in, and if it meets the height limitation.

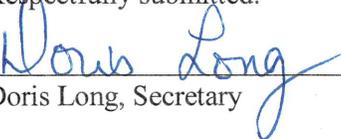
There is further discussion regarding how the H2A program works, the fact that the large number of temporary workers being brought into the County has an impact on communities, and that those concerns will need to be addressed. Also, managing the location of all types of farmworker housing, so that it does not replace productive AG ground.

Mr. Hooper list the future meeting schedule for the Planning Commission as follows:

No meeting for October, anticipating meetings for November 1st and December 6th. Not sure, due to the holiday, about January 3rd, this meeting could be scheduled a little later in the month. February 7th is set as a meeting date. Each of these meetings will cover different workshop topics.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted:


Doris Long, Secretary

Approved by:


Bill Bailey, Chairman