

September 3rd, 2010

Dear Mr. Brazel and Mr. Zimmerman,

I was surprised and disappointed to receive the enclosed letter from the City of Monroe Planning Department regarding our Comprehensive Plan map amendment docket application (CPA 2011-01 East Monroe Economic Development Group).

The six-page letter reads more like an aggressive opposition paper from an anti-development activist than an impartial staff report. In my years as a City Councilmember in Bothell and as a land developer I cannot say I have seen it's equal.

Based on the statements from the City Council and Mayor I have been under the impression that the City of Monroe is interested in encouraging economic development, especially one as exciting as what we are hoping to accomplish. Those public statements, along with the exciting opportunities that our project provides for the community, encouraged us to make this application.

Three items in particular leap out at me as demonstrative of how over-the-top staff's opposition is.

1) The Planning Department argues that the City of Monroe does not need commercial projects that will bring much-needed sales tax revenues. This belief certainly cannot be shared by the Mayor and Council, given their public statements to the contrary. Yet the enclosed letter is quite clear that our project is not welcome or wanted.

Please read the following quote from staff's letter and see if it matches the Mayor and Council's stated desire to increase economic development: "The applicant states that the city needs additional economic development as a justification for changing circumstances in the city. This assessment is not consistent with findings of the *2007 Snohomish County Buildable Lands Report...*"

2) The letter argues planning goals in the Growth Management Act (GMA) that relate specifically to agricultural and rural properties in the county should be applied to properties in the city limits of Monroe. Properties within city limits are, by definition in the GMA, intended to be urban. To argue that urban growth should not be extended to these properties because there are not yet sufficient public facilities is irrelevant. This is not a half-acre orphan parcel where the costs to deliver services outweigh the advantages to the city or property owner. On the contrary, this project is large, with enough land and economic upside to offset infrastructure costs.

"Preservation of agricultural lands" is clearly aimed at rural land, not properties within an urban growth boundary or within the city's limits. In fact, most cities have restrictions on agricultural practices such as prohibiting livestock and poultry within the city limits or using manure fertilizer. Yet the letter from staff uses this argument to oppose our application. The GMA arguments mystify me because the very intent and stated purpose

of the Act is to urbanize in and around city limits, not preserve agricultural lands in the City of Monroe.

3) The letter embarks on a largely negative review of a past amendment request that I was not involved with, nor had anything to do with. Staff's letter implies that this is a second or third bite of the apple for our application, when it is not. This is our first request and first application. I was not present, nor involved in any way in past requests and am not in any position to comment on the quality of the application, nor the arguments and criteria used in the ultimate decisions. Yet staff cherry-picked arguments Planning Commissioners used to deny a request five or six years ago to support their own opposition to this project.

It would be counter-productive to respond line-by-line to staff's opposition to this project. Suffice to say I am very disappointed in the anti-development positioning of City staff as it relates to this request.

I would request that instead of this "report" being forwarded to the Planning Commission as part of their packet, I be allowed the chance to meet with staff to discuss how we can improve the application sufficiently to get an impartial report. That way Planning Commissioners and City Council can weigh the challenges and benefits of our application in a fair and balanced manner.

Thank you for your consideration.



Joshua Freed

East Monroe Economic Development Group, LLC