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**PLUMAS COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**  
Minutes of the Meeting of April 15, 2010

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The Plumas County Planning Commission (the *Commission*) convenes in a Meeting on April 15, 2010, at 10:00a.m. in the Planning and Building Services Conference Room, Quincy, CA; Chair Mark Dotta presiding. Members appointed are as follows:

1. Mark Dotta, Chair (District 1);
2. Elizabeth "Betsy" Schramel, Vice Chair (District 2);
3. Richard Rydell, Commissioner (District 3);
4. Larry Williams, Commissioner (District 4); and
5. John Olofson, Commissioner (District 5).

Staff in Attendance: Randy Wilson, Planning Director  
Rebecca Herrin, Senior Planner  
Dennis Miller, GIS Coordinator  
Heidi Wightman, Recording Secretary

Supervisors in Attendance: Lori Simpson

I. **CALL TO ORDER** - By Chair Dotta

II. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG** – By Planning Commission and Attendees

III. **ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Betsy Schramel, John Olofson, Larry Williams, Mark Dotta

**Absent:** Rich Rydell

IV. **CONSENT ITEMS:**

A. **ITEMS TO BE CONTINUED OR WITHDRAWN FROM THE AGENDA**

Dotta asks the Commissioners if there are any items to be continued or withdrawn from the agenda. Hearing none, Dotta calls for a motion to approve the agenda as shown. Williams makes the motion, Olofson seconds the motion, and a unanimous affirmative voice vote is recorded.

B. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There are no minutes to approve.

## V. COMMISSIONER REPORTS / COMMENTS

- Williams reports he is on the hospital Measure A Committee and they had a meeting last week. The hospital is not going to sell any more bonds this year and they've applied for funding through the federal government. They should hear back late August/early September. If they receive the grant, that's how improvements for construction for the hospital will be funded. There was a good explanation in the newspaper this week about what happened with the bonds and interest rates, etc.
- Williams questions if anyone present is from the CAPR (Citizens' Alliance for Property Rights), which is a nationwide property rights group. They will be having their first meeting on Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. Williams distributes information about the group gathered from their website. Williams questions Olofson if he plans to attend the meeting. Olofson replies that he was, but after speaking with Anne Eldred, Chair of the Sierra County Planning Commission, he does not feel the group "has it in for" the Plumas County General Plan. Olofson also feels that because of the Open Meetings Act, transparency, and outreach to the public the Planning Commission is not giving groups like this a reason to complain. Williams adds that they are a counter balance to the High Sierra Rural Alliance.
- Schramel reports that the working group in her district met and it was a very good evening. All of the members of the working group had done their homework, looked up the elements, and had good questions. She feels it is moving along nicely. Schramel adds that she appreciates Randy Wilson and Becky Herrin travelling around and attending the meetings because it helps to have staff in attendance to answer questions.
- Christy Jamason, working group participant, comments that it still remains a little bit vague about what the working groups are supposed to be doing. The homework assignments have been okay, but there hasn't been any dramatic input into the process from her perspective. It seems like there has been a lot of education towards them, but little input being taken from them. It appear the next step is to comment on the draft, but they haven't seen the document yet. Becky Herrin replies that she and Randy Wilson have read the draft and there are a few minor changes, so it will be ready to go out soon and it will be sent to the working groups to review. Williams adds that he has heard the same comments from the Working Group in the Quincy area, that they are not getting to voice a lot of opinions and concerns, and they will be reviewing a draft that they didn't have any input on. Randy Wilson interjects that they are trying to get the working groups up-to-speed on California General Plan law, types of good formats, and the kinds of policies that are being looked at so that when the draft comes out the working groups will then have the tools of that background to give substantial input into the draft. The working groups will then, in turn, filter the information back out to the community as a network. Wilson does not feel it was designed that the consultants would take input from the working groups on exactly what policy issues they wanted to put in the draft.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY**

Dotta opens the Public Comment Opportunity. John Shower, Executive Director of Moonlight Valley Alliance and a member of the Indian Valley Working Group, distributes a paper he wrote titled "***Plumas County General Plan Revision - Environment and the Economy***" and requests the information it contains be put on the agenda at a later time for discussion. Showers states he talked to Becky Herrin about having the North Arm area considered a sensitive area like Genesee, and she replied that will come into play when they get to zoning. Shower suggests perhaps an acknowledgement that it is a potential sensitive area and it will require further study once the General Plan is adopted. Shower asks the Commissioners to read the paper and perhaps discuss it at a future meeting. They will then know how to proceed.

Holly George from the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) reports that the Planning Commission viewed the *Passion for the Land* DVD last summer. UCCE is now partnering with the Feather River CRM to have a public screening of both that DVD and the Feather River CRM's *Meadow Restoration* at the Town Hall Theater on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30.

Terri Simon-Jackson, Forest Supervisor's representative for the Plumas National Forest, reports that the roundtable for the National Planning Rule for the National Forest happened on April 6<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento, which will be followed with webinars in Redding and other areas. When she gave that presentation to the Board of Supervisors, they were upset that the webinar would be held on a Tuesday because the Counties all meet on Tuesdays. The webinar has been rescheduled for the County Supervisors on Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup> from 1-2 p.m. The webinar is about National Forest Land Management Rule, which is an umbrella under which they could do all their land management plan revisions.

## **VII. GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS**

### **A. CONSULTANT TEAM'S REPORT**

#### **1. STATUS ON CONSULTANT PRODUCTS**

Dennis Miller, GIS Coordinator, reports that Coleen Shade is off this week so he doesn't have anything to post to the website. Wilson adds that she is attending the National APA.

### **B. PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY**

There is no public comment.

## **VIII. PRESENTATION: THE WILLIAMSON ACT – Becky Herrin, Senior Planner**

Senior Planner, Becky Herrin, states that some months ago, after a discussion about the Williamson Act, the Commission decided it should be a presentation at a future meeting. Herrin distributes a packet of information about the Williamson Act and gives a Power Point presentation.

**Transcriber's Note:** Attached you will find the content of Ms. Herrin's Power Point presentation. This material can also be located on the Planning and Building Services Website ([www.plumascountyplanningandbuilding.com](http://www.plumascountyplanningandbuilding.com)).

Following are some of the main points covered:

- Williamson Act Contracts allow landowners to voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open space uses in exchange for a reduction in property tax. Contracts have a rolling 10-year term.
- Farmland Security Zones (FSZ), also known as "Super Williamson" offer greater property tax reduction in exchange for a 20-year rolling term.
- The Open Space Subvention Act provides for the partial replacement of local property tax revenue forgone as a result of participation in the Williamson Act. Plumas County receives approximately \$104,000 per year. The State is not currently funding the program.
- Counties can choose to non-renew contracts to initiate roll out. Non-renewals create a gradual increase in taxes each year but the reassessment procedure is complicated and time-consuming.
- Currently, only Sierra Valley is mapped for Important Farmland, which is necessary to enter into "Super Williamson" contracts (FSZ).

Discussions take place during and after Herrin's presentation, with the following points discussed by the Commissioners, staff, and other present:

Dotta questions if it is justifiable for the County to issue non-renewals when the Subvention funds no longer exist. Chuck Leonhardt, County Assessor, replies that last year when the Subvention funds were first eliminated, County CAO's and Boards of Supervisors decided to wait and see. What happens with the State budget this year may determine how Boards are going to address the issue. Leonhardt feels that Boards would like to see the program continue, but need to recognize they are taking a hit in property tax dollars which are not being backfilled with Subvention dollars any longer. If they choose to non-renew, it would make County Assessor offices very busy. The Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and those organizations have been working in Sacramento trying to find a solution. Holly George adds that there are a lot of environmental groups who support the program because it is not just benefitting agriculture. There's a lot of wildlife habitat that benefits by keeping the lands in agriculture and working landscapes.

Schramel questions when the mapping for other areas of the County will be able to be done. Herrin replies that there are unpublished soil studies for Indian Valley. The Department of Conservation told them to come up with a definition of "locally important land" that qualifies to go into Farmland Security Zones. They would then look at mapping the areas if money was available. They came up with the definition, but it died due to our lack of ability to map the soils area and publish the soil studies. Randy Wilson clarifies that for "Super Williamson" (FSZ) you need the soil studies, for the Williamson Act it's not necessary because anything designated Agriculture Preserve (AP) qualifies for a Williamson Act contract. John Shower comments that if it takes 10 years to build a reassessment with possibly 5 years of challenges, it almost seems like a non-issue. The County would need to start now if

they want to do something in the next 15 years. Basically, the State has you between a rock and a hard spot by not providing the funding.

Holly George adds that in regard to the important farmland mapping issue, they have had meetings with the Soil Conservation Service which is now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS is the one who had done the official maps. NRCS contracted with the Forest Service and they have maps of the valleys of the Plumas, but those are not the printed maps Becky is talking about. They met with the folks and Holly is under the understanding that if the Planning Department and Board of Supervisors approve what the local group comes up with, then that could be used by the Department of Conservation in lieu of the Important Farmland Series maps that are based on a printed map. It is a topic that can possibly be looked at again because there are landowners in Indian Valley and Meadow Valley who have asked why they're not eligible. However, the County may question doing that if it's going to result in a significant drop in property taxes if they don't have any assurance that in some timely manner the State would be backfilling some of those with Subvention funds. Leonhardt adds that his office could get the reassessments done if they had to, but the big issue really has to do with benefits of the program as provided to a variety of interests that don't always agree on things. It creates another tool that doesn't go into perpetuity but allows family ranches to stay in business. Williams questions if there is any way to designate properties in Indian Valley without the maps. Herrin replies that they would need to come up with the definition that all Agriculture Preserve is locally important. It may be a matter of sending a letter to the State to get that process going. Leonhardt adds that the Board of Supervisors has a committee called the Land Conservation Board that reviews applications from people who want to put property in the Williamson Act and also when they want to take them out. That committee was a catalyst to make this work happen.

## **IX. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **A. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **1. PLANNING DEPARTMENT WEBSITE UPDATE**

Randy Wilson reports that the County is moving towards a new website, but he's not sure how Planning & Building Services' current website will migrate over at this point. Wilson adds that it will be a very impressive-looking website with a lot of information on it. Dennis Miller adds that the new County website will be more like what was done with the Planning & Building Services' website. He will continue to update the website until the transition is made and everything will be transferred to the new site, which should be a seamless transition.

## 2. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REPORT

Randy Wilson reports on the following items recently presented to, or discussed by, the Board of Supervisors:

- **Alliance for Workforce Development.** March unemployment rates for Plumas County were 22.8%, the third highest in the State. There have been twelve business closures since July 2009, with approximately 60 employees lost. However, the State only tracks business closures if they're 10 or more employees.
- Jim Wilcox with the Feather River CRM gave an annual report update to the Board of Supervisors. Randy Wilson asked Wilcox to give a presentation to the Planning Commission. Nancy Fluke will make copies of the annual report for distribution to the Planning Commission.
- The Town Hall showing of *Passion for the Land* and the Feather River CRM DVD will be on May 18<sup>th</sup>.
- The Board of Supervisors is gearing up for adoption of the 2010/11 budget. There's going to be a budget workshop on June 15<sup>th</sup> with the Board, and a public hearing in the afternoon.
- **Irrigated Lands** – Holly George reports that the fees that are charged to agriculture land owners are increasing from 0.12/acre to 0.42/acre. These fees go to the Regional Water Quality Control Board to help offset administration of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Irrigated lands have historically been surface water, but they will be extending it to include ground water. George, County Counsel, and the Executive Director for the Upper Feather River Watershed Group took a letter to the Board of Supervisors to urge the Board to encourage the Regional Board to look at a tiered or more flexible implementation of the regulations. The Regional Board tends to be one-size-fits-all, and a lot of the emphasis is on chemicals, which we don't have in our watershed.

## 3. REVIEW OF THE EXISTING PLUMAS COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

There is no discussion.

## 4. ON-GOING PROJECT UPDATES

There is no report on on-going projects.

## X. CORRESPONDENCE – None.

## **XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Presentation by John Shower – Shower suggests reading the information he distributed and then discuss putting it on the agenda.

Chuck Leonhardt – Follow-up on Becky Herrin's presentation on the Williamson Act.

Follow-up to the Williamson Act presentation – Allow smaller acreage for specialty crops, native goods, truck farming, etc. Allowing incentives at the County and State level such as the Williamson Act does. Olofson suggests creating a list of notes so that when they get the first draft of the General Plan they can remember to start talking about these things. Wilson adds that they've created the "parking lot" of potential policies as a reminder. One would be possible General Plan policies on smaller parcels for Williamson Act. Dotta feels the specifics of the Williamson Act Contracts do not belong in the General Plan, they should be a separate ordinance. Discussion follows.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Dotta calls for a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion is made by Olofson, seconded by Williams, with a unanimous affirmative voice vote recorded to adjourn the meeting of April 15, 2010, at 12:40 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting is May 6, 2010, at 10:00 a.m., in the Planning & Building Department Conference Room.



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Mark Dotta, Chair  
Plumas County Planning Commission



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Heidi Wightman, Recording Secretary