

Meeting attendees

From Pitkin County:

Cindy Houben, Ellen Sassano, Zach Hendrix, Leslie Lamont, Chad Abraham

Citizens:

Jeffrey Woodruff (sp?), John Doyle, Joseph Wells, Peter (no last name), Sara Nadolny, Susan Fleet Welch, Suzanne Caskey, Seamus Crowley, Climate Office, Phi Filerman, Suzanne Caskey, Gayle (no last name), Meg Haynes, Langdon Dresser, Kim Coates, Peter Santini, Mona Newton, Gayle (no last name), Chris Menges, Sam Barney, Tim Mooney.

Cindy began by saying a goal was to prioritize benefits of Growth Management and put GM into context, as well as address outstanding questions from the previous meeting. Zach went over county website functions, feedback and the agenda. Ellen said carrying capacity and its impact on schools, public health, landfill, etc., is a priority, asking “Did we get it right?”

Chris Menges approved of the list of priorities and asked about parking impacts at construction sites and short-term rental properties.

Cindy said this is a tricky issue that can harm the county’s rural character.

The question was posed: Should there be a “commercial/residential” category in the LUC?

Phi Filerman said there is a need for an affordable-housing standard and that when a home is approved, there is no idea how it will be used, as use changes over the years, including as a short-term rental. Neighborhood master plans do not offer much in the way of guidance on the issue, Cindy said.

Suzanne Caskey asked if the county has received feedback from neighbors of short-term rentals.

Cindy said the caucuses could be asked for feedback on impacts such rentals are having.

Filerman said impacts can include people partying and parking violations, and that HOA officials can be difficult to reach. The way the Ranch at Roaring Fork handles the issue is requiring owners of short-term rentals to register with the HOA. This allows tracking of complaints and an easy way to lodge them.

Gayle said most HOAs of condo complexes strictly enforce how long a unit can be rented.

Ellen Sassano said the county definitely needs to look at the impacts and develop recommendations for standards. Cindy said the state allows local flexibility, including collecting impact fees for increased use of roads, law enforcement, etc.

Mona Newton said the county should also consider the benefits of short-term rentals and mentioned a city, possibly Vancouver, that taxes second homes and short-term rentals to help cover costs across the board, compared to establishing a new housing category.

Kim Coates agreed that making owners of rental properties register with the county so they can be taxed may make sense and that the goal should be uniformity. Filerman said Steamboat requires that short-term rentals be approved by immediate neighbors.

Short-term rentals also need to be viewed through the climate lens, Cindy said, citing energy budgets and other ways to measure energy use.

Chris Menges said there needs to be a balance between a “free-for-all” approach to draw business and strict regulations.

Newton said the climate lens is a very different way of looking at Growth Management, comparing the impact of having 55,000 people in the county versus 17,000 year-round residents. Emission goals should be set for 2030, 2040 and 2050, for instance, she said, to help the county prepare for more people.

As far as population and housing, Caskey asked when the county and its residents say that capacity has been reached. She noted some believe the county can handle 100,000 people. Can we tolerate every home turning into a lodge? she asked.

Cindy noted that GM involves water and sewer capacity, quality of life and enjoyment of resources, and that zoning is meant to control how many people the county can serve. The county is seeing more requests for service, including additional fire stations.

There has to be a limit to protect the quality of life, said Susan Fleet Welsch, saying the city’s Lumberyard project will add more people and traffic. Zoning doesn’t seem to matter, she said. Cindy said the impact on services must be considered if a worker lives far from their job, adding that balance is key and the current residential situation is out of whack. Welsch said affordable housing continues to be occupied after a worker retires, another issue that needs addressing.

Cindy noted that APCA does not require a person to move from their unit upon retirement.

Cindy asked if there is an ultimate number regarding carrying capacity and quality of life. For mitigation for affordable housing versus standards, should there be a mixture? The main issue is where to build affordable housing, Cindy said.

Menges said that, given the pandemic, telecommuting options should be explored and perhaps incentivized for developers.

Sam Barney said there is an inherent conflict between nationwide population increases and living in a popular place that people want to move to. Resource use needs to be addressed, but so do owners’ property rights, he said, adding affordable housing should be located next to transit hubs.

Cindy and Zach began a presentation on the current GM system, a growth matrix and questions from the public.

John Doyle finished the meeting by saying the traffic at the roundabout, despite the pandemic, is as bad as he’s ever seen it. He suggested doing a count of private planes at the airport and comparing it with prior years. Down-zoning can work, he said, citing Little Annie Basin.