

## Questions on San Juan County Housing Needs

Comments Richard Fralick

I have a number of document organization and factual questions that I have already given to the County Administrator via a marked up copy of both Appendix B and Section B, Element 5, Housing for consideration by staff. I hope that he will be getting back to me with some answers prior to the workshop.

With regard to Section B, Element 5, Housing, as a bare minimum I think the document should be clearly organized to reflect the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070 with "...goals, policies, objectives and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing..." In the document as written I find goals and policies; objectives and mandatory provisions are not clearly set forth.

Philosophically I think we should provide just what we are required to provide, nothing more and nothing less, thus reserving to the County as much flexibility as possible to deal with our future housing needs as they change. In this regard I would ask a response from the CD&P to Orcas attorney Peg Manning's comment, in her communication to the Council, "... the plain fact is that the County can comply with the GMA by approving a simple update that reflects the population estimates, acknowledges that there is sufficient land in the County zoned to accommodate housing for that population growth, and sets forth the incentives already in place for affordable housing. This approach has been used successfully in other counties and has already been approved by GMHBs."

For the purposes of the Housing Element Workshop scheduled for Monday, April 6, as a bare minimum I would like to see the following items in the Section B, Element 5, Housing discussed:

A growth rate of 2.2 %, is this straight line or compounded?

Why in table 5-B are the percentages of 2000 carried forward to 2025. There may be good planning reasons to set different ratios in the future. Surely year 2000 is not the ideal?

According to Table 5-B, in 2008 there were 7452 households. At a growth rate of 2.2% (assuming straight line) this results in 164 new households/year not the 175 on page 5. What am I missing?

Percentage of upper-income households on page 5 is stated as 29 percent. Table 5-B says 28%. Please make them consistent.

Page 5 the numbers in "Addressing Housing Need Resulting from Population Growth" appear to be inconsistent with number of additional housing units for very-low and low

additional housing units at the bottom of the page. Once again what am I missing or at least make them consistent.

What do you mean by “workers” and “working families”. Please define. Also I do not see where you include persons who work but do not get a wage per se. It is demeaning to hard working entrepreneurs, small business owners, farmers, etc who work hard but appear not to be included in the working demographic. It can also skew the income numbers.

One of the critical issues that I do not see discussed any where in the documents is why the median household income in San Juan County is low. It is implied that the median income is low because people are willing to work for less to live in paradise. Projecting this forward (in Appendix 5, Summary) it is stated that even if “2,969 housing units” are built an additional “3000+ workers will need to be brought to the islands daily”. This statement fails to acknowledge market forces. In such a scenario, people will only be working in paradise not living in paradise. This is not much (if any?) of an incentive (counter-incentive?) to work for less and wages can only rise in such a scenario. We need to discuss how this will cause future housing needs to change.

In “Housing Policy” # 2 storm water regulations are mentioned. This appears to be an after-thought (sentence is not even complete) and there is no discussion anywhere else that I can see. Either discuss this more thoroughly or take it out.

In “Policies for Affordable Housing” I would like to see the following discussed:

Rental Housing: Discuss as affordable housing in a comprehensive fashion.

# 2. Housing Authority. The Council needs to vigorously discuss this as an option before committing to it. It has significant implications for the future of housing and the taxpayers in the County. There are few questions that have been asked but for me have yet to be answered. What is the County’s role to be in providing affordable housing? What specific benefits would accrue to the County by establishing a housing authority? What would it do? What would it cost? John Campbell, a leading affordable housing advocate in the community, has proposed using a public corporation structure instead of a housing authority. What are the advantages/disadvantages of this approach? To proponents of a housing authority I would say the following. It is neither “fear mongering” nor is it “inappropriate” to ask for this discussion. Let’s have an open and frank conversation before a decision is made. Everyone will be better served.

#4. Permanent Funding Mechanism. The voters must be involved in this decision and any policy for establishing a permanent funding source must explicitly state this. It should be acknowledged that they have already spoken by rejecting an earlier REET. This does not mean that a future, differently (better) formulated tax proposal would not pass. It is my belief, that any County funded affordable housing program should only be established by a majority vote of its citizens. Language should reflect this.

#6. Does this mean the entire UGA or sub-districts within the UGA?

#10. Housing Support Services. What are these, who does it, what will it cost and is this really something the County needs or can afford to do?

#21. Utility Limited Improvement Districts. As we learned, the County does not have the authority to do this. Should we get the authority, do we want to establish them? What utilities are we talking about? What would a ULID look like in view of the current private utility providers that exist? Let's discuss.

There are many more questions but if we can answer the above questions I think we will be a lot closer to making an informed decision.

Thanks for taking the time to read my perspective on this.