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Summary of October 10, 2019
Clatsop Plains Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #4
Pacific Grange
90475 Highway 101

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m. by Mary Kemhus, CPCAC Chair.

CPCAC Members Present

Diane Heintz
Mary Kemhus
Jerri Myers
Maria Pincetich
Robert Stricklin

CPCAC Commissioners Absent

Staff Present

Julia Decker

Public Present

Rep. Tiffany Mitchell
Tallie Spiller
Comm. Sarah Nebeker
Russ Earl

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Welcome and Introductions

The CPCAC members, staff and members of the public introduced themselves. Due to roofing contractors, the group took a brief break to move to another part of the building, where the noise was not as loud.

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Review of August 8, 2019, Meeting Summary:

Diane Heintz commented she would like noise pollution added to the list of issues in the Goal 2 discussion. The other committee members agreed and staff stated she would revise the summary accordingly.

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Report from Countywide CAC (CCAC) Liaison:

Mr. Stricklin reported first on the previous day's Planning Commission meeting, where the commission heard a presentation by the county's Natural Resources Manager, Steve Meshke, who manages the county's parks. Mr. Stricklin described the low level of staffing and saw a disconnect between the care for the ecosystems and staff work and infrastructure to make the parks useful to visitors.

Mr. Stricklin reported the September 19th Countywide CAC was focused on zoning and plan changes affect farming and impacts on affordable housing. He said discussion included concerns about protecting not just large pieces of EFU-zoned land but also smaller pieces as well, such as the small three- or five-acre pieces that can still be viably farmed and are still valuable resources. He thought extending protection to smaller farms would take a shift in attitude at the state level.

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Goal 3 Overview/Discussion:

Maria Pincetich was interested in the definition of "valid" farming, and the group discussed whether right-to-farm protections extended to the RA (Residential-Agriculture) zones. She wondered how zoning might create an impediment to farming smaller parcels.

Staff briefly described the activities covered by farming are broad, including raising livestock (cows, horses, bees) and growing produce (vegetables, flowers). Farm use, she continued, has to do with the use of the property primarily for the purpose of producing a profit. She pointed out, however, it is not necessary to make a profit and many people engage in farming activities for their own benefit. The place where it can get tricky, she continued is that sometimes people want an exemption from building codes for farm buildings and must demonstrate they are commercially farming. Others present added that exemption from taxes also impacts people's decision about whether to farm commercially. Staff noted there also is pressure from many people who desire to build a dwelling on farmland without actually farming.

Chair Mary Kemhus stated concerns about hobby farms and "wannabe" farmers who are not able to afford farmland. She wondered if there were a way to use zoning to encourage farming. Chair Kemhus wondered about creating a sort of cluster concept that would permit larger parcels to be divided up for farming in

1 smaller pieces. She thought this would contribute to community resilience. She said she was trying to think
2 of a way the protect a larger lot for farm use while still breaking it into smaller, affordable pieces for farm
3 use by people who could not afford the larger parcel in its entirety. Staff wondered if the RA-10 Zone,
4 which exists but which currently has no lands in that zoning. Changing land from EFU (Resource) to
5 Residential-Agriculture 5 of 10 would still require a goal exception she said, and but she wondered if
6 streamlining the process for farm use of smaller, more affordable parcels might accomplish what Chair
7 Kemhus was suggesting.

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9 There was discussion about whether right-to-farm protections extend to farming activities outside farm
10 zones, such as in the RA zones.

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12 Staff noted people frequently contact the Planning office about changing zoning of resources parcels and
13 learn from Planning staff how difficult it is. It's difficult for a reason, staff said, because the state
14 determined that 80 acres was the minimum necessary to farm or produce commercial forestry effectively
15 and efficiently and in 1997 the minimum lot size for the AF, F-80 and EFU zones went to 80 acres to
16 preserve the larger pieces for resource use.

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18 In response to a question from Board of Commissioners Chair Sarah Nebeker, staff said she would check
19 with Director Gail Henrikson about the final recommendation(s) from the farming group that had been
20 reviewing revisions to the agriculture element of the recent farm/forest updates in the zoning ordinance.

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22 In response to questions, staff said she was not aware of any large farms in the Clatsop Plains area,
23 although she noted there are some hobby farms, and she pointed out Mr. Stricklin has a bulb farm and
24 raises daffodils. She said much of the Clatsop Plains is acknowledged Goal 3/4 exception area and is
25 considered irrevocably committed to development of housing, mostly up and down Hwy 101.

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27 Ms. Pincetich wondered about balancing the need to preserve farmlands with the need farmers have for
28 farm labor. The group and staff discussed the different options available to farmers for farm help and
29 seasonal farm help dwellings in zones other than the EFU. Staff noted the RA-zoned properties, where farm
30 use is a Type I activity, are smaller in size, from five acres or less, and the need for farm labor has not come
31 up before for such small parcels.

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33 The group was interested in revising the Goal 3 language to recognize and encourage small agricultural
34 endeavors, farm-to-table and locavore activities.

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36 The group discussed the cannabis and hemp industries. Ms. Pincetich commented a number of hay farmers
37 have discovered hemp is more profitable and have switched crops, driving up the cost of hay.

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39 In response to questions, staff explained cannabis and hemp are considered agriculture in Clatsop County
40 and the cops are allowable with no special restrictions beyond the requirements of the state. She noted a
41 lot of the cannabis growers are putting greenhouses on AF- and RA-zoned properties, and she outlined
42 conflicts described in at least one neighborhood but said the right to farm is protected. The group noted
43 hemp may replace other products, such as cotton, that are more carbon-intensive, so there may be a
44 tradeoff.

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46 Ms. Pincetich raised the issue of balancing of affordable housing with tsunami concerns and property
47 values. She wondered how other areas manage the issues. Tallie Spiller commented a lot of property values
48 seemed to have not yet absorbed the reality of sea level rise, and Jerri Myers commented there seems to
49 be more interest in homes and property on the east side of Hwy 101 now than in previous years.

1 Ms. Pincetich wondered about finding a way to encourage shifting living areas to higher ground and have
2 activity areas be in lower lying areas. She said this would cause a huge shift in planning and infrastructure
3 and housing over decades, but she thought it would be safer in the long run. She also asked how other
4 states have dealt with issues of lower income housing and said she had done a little bit of research, finding
5 in Colorado for example, they created temporary housing for lower income people who worked in higher
6 cost areas. She said she needed more information about what is done elsewhere on a variety of topics and
7 felt she needed more education. Staff suggested earmarking the housing issue, as housing is covered under
8 Goal 10, but she noted the whole Comprehensive Plan is a system and it is perfectly fine to call out the
9 issue of housing as it affects another goal, in this case Goal 3, and return to it.

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11 Chair Kemhus stated she was concerned the committee was too homogenous and not as representative of
12 the Clatsop Plains as it should be. Others agreed. She asked if there were some way to review and possibly
13 augment the membership. Diane Heintz asked if the membership could be reopened to people who had
14 been denied based on residence previously. Staff said she would check with the director.

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16 In response to questions, staff outlined the process over the next 33 months or so, with the goal of
17 achieving a plan with vision looking forward over the next 20 years. There was discussion about what the
18 committee members hoped to achieve and the way the process would unfold.

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20 Ms. Heintz was concerned about being “too much in the weeds” and needing to look at larger concepts.
21 She thought it possible that the focus on the issues of today might not be as relevant three years from now,
22 for example.

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24 **Distribution of Meeting #5 Materials:**

25 Staff distributed materials for the next CPCAC meeting will be on the topic of Statewide Planning Goal 4 –
26 Forestlands. She promised to bring additional empty binders to the next meeting.

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28 The committee agreed to meet on Thursday, November 14th.

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30 **Closing Comments and Adjournment:**

31 ***There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 4:04 pm.***
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