

**Missoula City/County Elected Officials Policy Meeting
Planning and Grants Services Interlocal Agreement
October 28, 2009
10:05 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Council Chambers, 140 W Pine**

Present: Ed Childers, Renee Mitchell, Dick Haines, Marilyn Marler, Bill Carey, Michele Landquist, Bob Jaffe, Pam Walzer, Jason Wiener, Dave Strohmaeir, Jon Wilkins, Lyn Hellegaard, John Hendrickson, Jean Curtiss, Pat O’Herren, Karen Hughes, Mike Barton, Anne Hughes, James McCubban, and Bobbi Day

1. **Introductions and Public Comments** - None
2. **Approval of [July 29, 2009 minutes](#)** – approved as presented.

3. Rural Initiatives Update ([Presentation](#))

Pat O’Herren, Director of Rural Initiatives (RI), introduced Karen Hughes and spoke about his past work history. He talked about RI’s mission statement to help maintain rural landscapes and what those landscapes provide. RI works towards balanced solutions while concurrently sustaining local economies and cultures. For example, in the Potomac area there were development issues, especially with a large ranch that leases land that is critical to the ranching operation. RI looks at ways to assist people to stay on these lands.

Karen Hughes provided a [handout](#) with the RI mission, the FY2009-FY2010 Progress Report and Work Plan, work plan priorities, and major projects work plan. The projects fall into several categories:

- Parks and Trails
- Conservation and Restoration
- Rural Planning Policy and Implementation
- Rural Community Support, Capacity-building, and Partnerships
- Administration and Management

Key projects that RI has been working on in the past and this last year included:

- Rural areas support and outreach through County Community Councils providing local connections to government. This was done through the RI e-newsletter and website, serving as a liaison between communities, community council start ups and support, partnerships with individuals, agencies, and community groups to keep the connection between rural communities and the County, and holding social events.
- Working lands conservation and enhancement using funds from the Open Space bond. The Open Lands Committee has reviewed seven projects valued at \$6.9 million using the bond funds. The cost to the County for this work was \$175 per acre to protect land for conservation which was pretty reasonable considering the cost of land. This Committee also helps enhance communication in rural communities with agencies, outreach, and partnerships.

The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands through the LEGACY project have worked with Plum Creek to purchase thousands of acres has been a successful program. BCC has been heavily involved in the LEGACY project but not with the discussions of land transactions; they assist in bringing the information to the public.

RI started integrating the trails into the parks program this year and will require more staff/intern assistance. They are starting a planning process to update 1997 area plans that will include the Trails Plan and hope to match it up with the Urban Parks Plan.

- The PLACE (Practical Landscape Assessment for Conservation and Enhancement) project will focus on gathering information that is used currently for subdivision and bond project review into one comprehensive database. The focus will be on four key areas: working lands, flora and fauna, aquatic and riparian, and human connections. There will soon be maps they will reveal at open houses this winter to share information and get feedback.
- Rural lands policy and planning has included discussions at the State and Federal level that affect working landscapes. One example recently was the reciprocal road agreement between Plum Creek and USFS. This issue became extremely contentious because of the lack of public involvement in the process; the BCC was able to help the situation with a letter. That later helped result in a successful outcome. RI continues to work with Plum Creek on planning for their remaining acres of land.

Other issues RI is tracking at the federal level include Jon Tester's bill that will soon be presented for a BCC recommendation. RI also looks at State policy and track all land use that affects rural lands. Such issues include WUI (Wildland Urban Interface), water policies, and tracking new legislation on planning and zoning issues.

Regional plans are another area RI works on. The Seeley Lake Plan was just reviewed by the Planning Board and staff are now preparing for BCC hearings on it.

Work has began this year on the Lolo Plan with a consultant. It became apparent that a regional planning process would not work at this point so they were working on some key areas to get zoning in place and see if there was success. If there was, then they could move onto other areas.

Future work includes a Growth Policy amendment to address gravel resources, and implementation of the Seeley Lake Plan and areas covered by the Lolo Plan.

- The Streamside protection and restoration was proposed in 2007 with lessons learned. Staff have been working with a Technical Advisory Committee and found the need to focus on education and outreach. Channel migration mapping will be key in showing how water flows.

There are also some restoration projects on mining claims that staff were working on with the Forest Service and Trout Creek in the Nine Mile drainage.

Mr. O'Herren reported that in the next year RI hoped to settle several outstanding contracts and would be meeting with Plum Creek to discuss planning and zoning. They will also continue to work with other counties on possible growth issues, like in Powell County adjacent to the community of Seeley Lake. They will be working with rural land owners to retain and enhance living landscapes with the County Parks and Trails program and continue to work hard to provide a link between rural residents and county government.

At the end of the presentation Commissioner Curtiss thanked Mr. O'Herren and Ms. Hughes for the presentation and noted that the work RI does was important and contributed to the quality of life in the City of Missoula.

Councilman Jaffe echoed this comment and asked about the ownership of the land surrounding Missoula. How much was private and how much was owned by Plum Creek? Mr. O'Herren responded that Plum Creek previously had enough property to effectively protest any countywide zoning. This has changed with the LEGACY Project. Although it is a little difficult to calculate because we are not completely sure what will happen with all

the LEGACY lands as they are transferred from The Nature Conservancy into other ownership. In two of the critical planning areas Plum Creek does still own the majority of land, namely Potomac/Greenough and the Clearwater drainage.

Councilman Weiner asked what guided the Nature Conservancy. Mr. O'Herren noted that that question had been raised in several meetings. Plum Creek visited with other buyers in earlier discussions. The Nature Conservancy was able to purchase lands in the works through the LEGACY project and turn many of them over to the Forest Service with federal funding. However, in other areas, such as up in Evaro, TNC is hopeful to find a willing buyer such as the State, Tribes or the Forest Service, but no one is stepping forward to make an offer. They would like to find someone to purchase the land and keep them in conservation, but there were no guarantees.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Day

Support Services Administrator
Office of Planning and Grants

(To listen to this meeting in its entirety, [click on this link](#))