



COLUSA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting #6 – January 12, 2011

Steering Committee members Bob Alvernaz (at-large), Charles Bergson (City of Williams), Denise Erickson (Family Action Centers of Colusa County), Ben Felt (Colusa County Chamber of Commerce), Ashley Indrieri (Family Water Alliance), Nancy Loudon (Soroptomists International of Colusa County), Bill Lovelace (at-large), Jim Reading (Colusa Lions Club), Kay Spurgeon (Colusa County Office of Education), Brian Stice (City of Colusa), Gary Teragawa (Colusa Regional Medical Center), Rachelle Valverde (Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District), Darrin Williams (Colusa County Resource Conservation District) and Kathy Yerxa (at-large) were present.

Public Comment

The topics of discussion for the meeting were Community Services and Facilities.

An opportunity for public comment was provided. Dixie LeGrande, of Williams, provided the following comments:

- The County should look for ways to cooperate and leverage resources to collectively bargain on behalf of service providers.
- The County should increase outreach and education to youths regarding municipal services.

Community Services and Facilities

Ben Ritchie, the prime consultant for the General Plan team, provided an overview of the requirements for a General Plan Community Services and Facilities Element, and described existing municipal services for water and sewer provisions throughout the County.

The Committee identified the following information, priorities and concerns for the General Plan Update:

- Priority for the extension of municipal wastewater services should be given to systems that pose a public health hazard due to insufficient capacity or deferred maintenance.
- The County should identify neighborhoods that are currently served by septic systems, but are in proximity to municipal sewer systems, then take feasible steps to encourage these neighborhoods to connect to municipal systems.
 - Members noted that there are areas within the County, particularly in the City of Colusa SOI, that are served by failing septic systems. These areas should be targeted for connection to existing municipal systems.
- The Committee acknowledged the need to reduce density allowances in the Rural Residential Land Use Designation category from one unit per acre to one unit per two acres

due to septic capacity issues and the change from Rural Residential to Urban Residential in many areas of the County. However, at the Urban Residential land use designation it was recognized that sewer service would be necessary.

- The General Plan should support efforts already underway by existing public utility districts (PUDs), and the County should not directly provide water or sewer services to residents.
- The County should consider the creation of a joint powers authority (JPA) that includes multiple service providers. The JPA could leverage resources to secure additional funding and grants for system upgrades.
 - The creation of a JPA should not reduce the autonomy of individual local PUDs.
- The Committee noted that projected growth in Maxwell will require the expansion and improvement of the existing wastewater system maintained by the Maxwell PUD.
- The Committee discussed the merits and benefits of pursuing the development of a larger centralized wastewater treatment facility that would serve many areas throughout the County. While the concept was supported, it was agreed that logistical concerns such as cost, feasibility and environmental impacts would likely prohibit such an action.
- Deficiencies in the Arbuckle wastewater conveyance and treatment infrastructure were noted. Particularly, the system generates significant odors, uses outdated technology, and should be relocated to another area of town.
- Craig Erickson, Colusa County Department of Environmental Health, provided the Committee with information regarding wastewater treatment and systems:
 - Wastewater is often the “forgotten utility”. It is out of sight, out of mind, until a problem occurs.
 - Technology, management, and financial capabilities are keys to effective operation of a wastewater system, and are key factors when pursuing funding or grants for system improvements. PUDs and municipal system operators must show strong technical, managerial and financing systems in order to effectively compete for money.
- The Committee discussed the difficulty in keeping communities small while still providing for enough new development to fund improvements to existing wastewater systems.
- There was agreement that there is a need to increase community awareness and increase public education about the real costs of wastewater infrastructure. In order to properly maintain the existing systems, existing users may need to pay increased rates.

- The County should work with existing PUDs to help them restructure rates and secure adequate funding for critical system improvements.
- The County should encourage PUDs to place users on fee-based services, rather than flat-fee services. Water meters should be installed and used.
- The County should consider requiring applicants for major renovation permits to convert to meter-based systems as a condition of approval.
- The County should consider requiring new development to be “stubbed” for connection to a municipal wastewater system, even if the new development is proposing on-site septic systems.
- The expanded use of private wastewater systems should be explored.
- Brian Stice, from the City of Colusa, discussed the need for coordination between the City and County to find a solution for neighborhoods within the County that may benefit from connection to City wastewater infrastructure.
- John Benoit, Executive Director of Colusa LAFCO, provided the following information:
 - The California Regional Water Quality Board does not favor private management of wastewater systems.
 - Continuously changing wastewater discharge requirements pose a problem for local utility districts.
 - Estimates that only 195 new wastewater connections are available in Arbuckle.
 - Questions whether the County has the resources available to provide ongoing and meaningful support to local PUDs.
 - County support and assistance to PUDs, to the extent feasible, is a good idea.
- If the Wintun Tribe pursues construction of a landfill, the County should encourage full compliance with all State and Federal environmental regulations.
- The Committee noted the ongoing problem of illegal solid waste dumping throughout the County.
 - Waste ends up on private lands, in creeks and near the side of roads.
- County should increase public awareness of legal dumping facilities to discourage illegal dumping.
 - Advertise low fees or free dumping availability.
 - Educate residents regarding location of dumping facilities.
 - Advertise small scale collection facilities in Arbuckle area.
 - County is developing a “sharps drop” facility (for needles, etc.)

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- County should encourage more community and private dumpsters to discourage illegal dumping.