

Siskiyou County Planning Commission
Joint Workshop with the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
October 15, 2024

The Joint Workshop with the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission of October 15, 2024, was called to order by Board of Supervisors Chair Kobseff at approximately 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor, Yreka, California.

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Hart, Melo, Lindler, Veale and Fowle

Community Development Department Staff Present: Rick Dean, Community Development Department Director; Hailey Lang, Deputy Director of Planning; William Carroll, Assistant County Counsel; Janine Rowe, Commission Clerk

Draft Community Visioning and Guiding Principles for the Siskiyou County 2050 General Plan Update

Board of Supervisors and Siskiyou County Planning Commission Public Hearing Joint Workshop to discuss the Draft Community Visioning and Guiding Principles for the Siskiyou County 2050 General Plan Update.

Staff Report:

The previously circulated Staff Report was reviewed by the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, and a presentation of the project was provided by Ms. Lang. Ms. Lang said today's meeting would be a workshop to discuss the draft Guiding Principles and Vision Statement for the Siskiyou County General Plan. She said the options for the Guiding Principles and Vision Statement were drafted as a result of comments from the public and from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Ms. Lang then introduced James Harnish of Mintier Harnish, the consultants.

Mr. Harnish began a PowerPoint presentation and explained that the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles form the base of the rest of the General Plan. He said today's goal would be to review the options and to receive feedback from the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission with the eventual goal of coming up with one vision and guiding principle for each topic.

Discussion was held that public participation in both the workshops on online surveys was very minimal.

Ryan Lester took over the presentation. He said the Vision Statement should be the highest level conceptualization for what the General Plan should be and where the county wants to go in the next 30 years. He said they are asking for direction on the provided options so they can prepare a more refined Vision Statement.

Mr. Lester read the four options for the Vision Statement, with option 4 being compiled by the TAC based on options 1 through 3.

In summary, Option 4 states that Siskiyou County is a family-oriented, close-knit community with thriving schools and abundant opportunities in recreation and business. It offers a strong economy with diverse employment fields and continues to be a popular vacation destination. The community focuses on maintaining its small-town feel while practicing environmental stewardship and wildfire protection. Agricultural land and rural heritage are conserved, with resources preserved for various uses.

Before discussion among the Board and Planning Commission, Chair Kobseff went through the Board's public hearing protocol. He asked if any correspondence had been received, and Board Clerk Wendy Winningham said correspondence had been received from David Webb, Dijana Karanovich, Jim Miller and family, Amber Jamieson, Elizabeth Diane, Nick Joslin and Carrie Lyen. Planning Commissioner Clerk Janine Rowe confirmed the same correspondence was provided to the Planning Commission.

There were no documents presented by staff, other county departments or public agencies. There were no arguments or evidence presented by proponents and no arguments or evidence presented by opponents.

Chair Kobseff opened the Public Hearing for comments related to the Vision Statement.

Public Comments:

Mr. Nick Joslin of Mt. Shasta said it is important to keep people informed about the process to ensure adequate participation. He said the fourth vision statement is a good synthesis of the previous three, capturing the broad character of their county despite its density. Mr. Joslin said he was willing to help improve public participation in any way possible.

Ms. Angelina Cook of McCloud said she was representing the McCloud Chamber of Commerce, Watershed Council, and Resource Center. She said their comments were more about the process as a whole and they are more interested in how to navigate the process so the unincorporated communities can have better representation. Ms. Cook said McCloud is underserved. She said public participation needs improvement and suggested direct communication methods such as email might be helpful. She said she understands the General Plan update will be a chance to improve County code and will help communities be eligible for grants.

Ms. Julianna Lucchesi, Community Development Director for the City of Yreka, said Yreka adopted their vision statement and shared the County's goals of self-sufficiency and renewable energy development. Ms. Lucchesi said despite participation challenges in their general plan, Yreka is committed to the County's goals and highlights the importance of diverse public engagement methods. She stressed the importance of regional partnerships to balance economies of scale and housing needs, and the city of Yreka will continue supporting the County's overall direction while fostering local cooperation and development initiatives.

Ms. Bonnie Wood of Yreka said she was pleased with the process despite the lack of participation. She suggested posting notices at libraries because they are an underused resource. She said she likes Option 4 for the Vision Statement.

There being no rebuttal by opponents nor proponents, Chair Kobseff brought the matter back to the Board and Commission for discussion.

Board Discussion: The Board of Supervisors gave the consultants their input for the Vision Statement options which included emphasis on private property rights, conservation as opposed to preservation of the County's natural resources, more reference to inclusiveness, making the permitting process more efficient, and issues surrounding living in a rural area that are faced by residents.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Veale said he would have liked to have seen something regarding generating revenue

for the county because government costs will increase and the county may be looking at a diminishing population. He thinks the county should look into biomass generation.

Commissioner Hart said he wanted to address the comment about agriculture going away. He said water curtailment will change the classification for AG-1 land which will cause many people to go out of business, and the land would most likely be repurposed and subdivided. Commissioner Hart also referenced a subdivision that was initially established in the early 1960s and property was inexpensive to buy at the time. But now the cost of the property has increased because of the product it produces, and he wondered if the County has reappraised those lots. Commissioner Hart said he understands the County is auditing agricultural lands to ensure they still meet the criteria for being in an agricultural preserve, and many landowners are concerned that their property could lose its ag preserve status which would lead to a significant tax increase. He said there are a lot of people in the county as well as outside the county that want agricultural to go away.

Commissioner Hart said he has a problem with the last sentence in Option 4 referred to by Supervisor Criss, and he said groundwater is under the jurisdiction of the Siskiyou County Flood Control District which is being governed by SGMA. Commissioner Hart said it could be considered interference with legal property rights and water rights that have been court decreed and granted by the state.

Commissioner Melo said he wanted to comment on the lack of participation and used McCloud as an example. He said when the County was in the process of determining whether or not to allow any more vacation rentals in that area, the Planning Commission did not receive any feedback from the McCloud Community Services District or any other agency in that area. Commissioner Melo also said that water is the most important thing in the county right now, and he is concerned because the State and the federal government want to control personal and ag wells and adjudicate water rights.

Commissioner Lindler said she agrees with earlier comments about supporting renewable energy. Because of the amount of fire rehab that needs to happen, it would be important to have a way to take care of the amount of biomass that remains. Commissioner Lindler said the sentence that talks about neighborhoods continuing to grow is dependent on the area, and she did not think the Vision Statement should include language regarding homes being well maintained and cared for because it was too subjective. Regarding the reference to the economy being strong with quality employment opportunities, Commissioner Lindler said she thinks the phrase is also subjective and the economy is definitely diverse but would not use the word strong. Commissioner Lindler agreed that ground water should not be discussed in the Vision Statement. However, if it is included, the word "preserve" should be removed because the County conserves and sustainably manages its resources.

Chair Fowle said it is essential that Siskiyou County's vision prioritizes the protection of private property, agricultural land, and water rights as well as emphasizes adaptive management of natural resources, and promotion of renewable energy. He said the General Plan should allow the County to beneficially utilize wildfire as a tool, with the understanding that it is impossible to completely prevent or stop wildfires. Commissioner Fowle also agreed that the word "preserve" should be deleted and be replaced with adaptive management.

The Board Chair called for a recess at 1:52 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 2:05 p.m.

Mr. Lester began the presentation on Guiding Principles. He described the Guiding Principles as

being more detailed by topic area. He said the TAC indicated it was important to pay attention to the County's rich history and how the County is well positioned to deal with future challenges.

Discussion was held that the number of members on the TAC consists of County department heads.

Mr. Lester said the consultants put together one option for each of the Guiding Principles based on input, and the TAC drafted a second option for each one. He said Guiding Principles expand on the Vision Statement and serve as guideposts for the goals, policies and programs. He said the statements should be fairly broad and continue to provide guidance.

Mr. Lester read through the options for the five topics—Hazards, Safety, and Wildfire Preparedness; Natural Resources and Scenery; Economic Development; Sense of Community and Unique Lifestyle; and Land Use, Housing, and Infrastructure. He said the TAC wants greater emphasis on commercial opportunities, manufacturing and economic development generally, and then focus on water and tying that to both agriculture, economic development, health, etc.

Before discussion among the Board and Planning Commission, Chair Kobseff went through the Board's public hearing protocol. No additional correspondence had been received. There were no documents presented by staff, other county departments or public agencies. There were no arguments or evidence presented by proponents, and no arguments or evidence presented by opponents.

Chair Kobseff opened the Public Hearing for comments related to the Guiding Principles.

Public Comments:

Mr. Nick Joslin of Mt. Shasta said he thought the Guiding Principles were a good synthesis of the concepts and that they encompass the county's diversity. He said he hoped there would be more participation by the public moving forward.

Ms. Bonnie Wood of Yreka said she appreciated hearing everyone's perspective and was impressed with the work by the consultants. She wondered if there would be resources to consult with experts regarding water since that is a huge issue in the county. She recommended some professors in Oregon who have come up with ways to increase groundwater retention for agriculture, citizens, and business development.

Ms. Angelina Cook of McCloud said she wanted to emphasize the intersection of economic development and natural resources and infrastructure that accommodates quality of life and to encourage less wasteful development and minimizing dependence on fossil fuels. She gave examples of public transit, community composting systems, and development of local food systems.

There being no rebuttal by opponents nor proponents, Chair Kobseff brought the matter back to the Board and Commission for discussion.

Board Discussion:

Supervisor Criss discussed language being included in the Hazard option to assist volunteer fire departments, EMS, and similar non-profits in applying for grants, diversified housing to include seniors and single people, and attracting large business and industries to boost employment.

Supervisor Ogren wanted to see language about evacuation routes. Regarding economic development, she said the focus should be on supporting current residents and businesses, boosting the local economy, and managing small businesses alongside natural resources.

Supervisor Valenzuela said he thought all the Guiding Principles had good parts and he could see take the best of the two options and melding them together.

Supervisor Haupt said many county hazards remain unaddressed, and the goal is to strengthen county infrastructure against all hazards, including frequent electric grid failures that impact many dependent seniors. For natural resources, he wanted language regarding managing forests for water yield with scrutiny on public agencies that use too much water in the uplands. Supervisor Haupt strongly disagrees with the language contained in Land Use.

Chair Kobseff said he wants to see more about creating efficiency in the permitting process.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Hart said he wants to see more about plans to utilize the County's biomass product. He said he does not think there is a sense of community in the County. He gave an example of a salmon festival in Humboldt County that he attended and felt that was more representative of a sense of community. Commissioner Hart expressed concerns about water allocation and usage along with the extensive use of pesticides and herbicides in a particular area in the county. He said despite the County's efforts to address those issues, there is a sense of frustration and hopelessness as no significant change seems to be happening and the situation seems to be getting worse. He also talked about restrictions on water usage by the state, and, using Scott Valley as an example, those restrictions will detrimentally affect the livelihoods of ranchers and farmers in that area.

Commissioner Lindler agreed with Supervisor Haupt that flooding, landslides and similar hazards should be included. When discussing wildfire safety, she wants to make sure sufficient ingress and egress is discussed, especially in towns. She would like to see something that encourages economic development of the county's natural resources in order to support renewable energy. Commissioner Lindler said the county needs infrastructure to handle the biomass that is currently being shipped out of county. She said she likes incentivized development to encourage future demand for housing. She said as an employer lack of affordable housing is one of the biggest hurdles in trying to recruit people to Siskiyou county. She would like to see improved infrastructure in the form of transportation and internet services.

At approximately 2:45 p.m., Commissioner Lindler had another appointment and left the meeting.

Chair Fowle said he concurs with Supervisor Haupt regarding the natural disasters that need to be included in Hazards.

Discussion was held that any amendments, modifications, or additions to the General Plan will be guided by the established principles, and each change will be evaluated based on how they align with the Guiding Principles. Therefore, more details regarding streamlining processes, allowing more uses, exempting things, etc., will be covered during those discussions.

Regarding Natural Resources, Chair Fowle wanted the language in Option 2 to reflect that an individual's property rights should be respected. He said wildfire risk has increased because of poor management of public lands. He would prefer to see the word enhancing instead of protecting when discussing the county's natural resources and that wildlands start being managed for the benefit of human life and wildlife. In dealing with water, Chair Fowle thinks it is essential that the county operate under a guiding principle of increasing and enhancing available water, i.e., groundwater, surface water, water retention, etc. As far as economic development is concerned, Chair Fowle would like to see small businesses encouraged to provide their products locally because he believes the county is missing out on revenue and the ability to remain independent. Chair Fowle said he

agrees with Commissioner Hart's comments about the sense of community, and he agrees with Supervisor Haupt's comments on land use and housing.

Chair Kobseff said he wanted the words preserve or preservation removed completely. He said he wants to make the Guiding Principles quick and simple and then move on to the permitting processes.

Supervisor Haupt suggested using bullet statements for the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles and Chair Kobseff agreed..

Commissioner Hart expressed his frustration with the lengthy permitting process, which takes 12 to 18 months for a building permit, but the County lacks staff and funding for efficient processing.

Discussion was held that the next step is for the consultants to meet with staff and make the changes to the Guiding Principles for the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission to consider.

It was suggested that a member of the Board of Supervisors and a member of the Planning Commission be included on the TAC on further development of the General Plan.

Commissioner Hart thanked the representative from the city of Yreka for their input.

Board of Supervisors Chair Kobseff closed the Public Hearing and adjourned the meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was concluded at approximately 2:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Hailey Lang, Secretary

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