

**Point Roberts Community Advisory Committee  
October 15, 2020 Meeting**

**Minutes**

Members

Allison Calder — PRRVA  
Stephen Falk — At-Large  
Judson Meraw — CoC (absent)  
Pamala Sheppard — At-Large  
Steve Wolff — PRTA

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the August 20, 2020 regular meeting were approved by e-mail. (There was no PRCAC meeting in September.)

Public Comment

Louise Cassidy: Ms Cassidy noted that she was interested in the garbage issue on the agenda, the recycling and composting program, and the rules for selection of the new at-large new member.

Mark Robbins: Mr. Robbins, president, Point Roberts Taxpayers Association (PRTA), noted that the recent letter from County Executive Satpal Sidhu to the PRCAC was discussed at the October PRTA meeting. The PRTA has informally recommitted to recognizing and utilizing the PRCAC and main vehicle for communicating positions and concerns of the Point Roberts community to Whatcom County government.

Martin Pommerenke: Mr. Pommerenke noted that he works with St. Paul's church in Bellingham and is attending the meeting to learn more about the needs of the community to see what, if anything, St. Paul's church could do to assist the community.

## Old Business

### \* Status of WCC 20.72 Revisions

Three PRCAC (individually) attended the Planning Commission meeting which reviewed the proposed changes to WCC 20.72. It was noted that there was little discussion about the actual changes, but more on the PRIBC's alternate approach to have a moratorium of the application of 20.72 while a replacement is considered, including to applying the general rules for unincorporated Whatcom County. The Planning Commission approved the changes. The next step is consideration by County Council's Planning and Development Committee on October 27, 2020, and then consideration by County Council on November 10, 2020.

Proposed comments at the Planning and Development Committee on October 27, 2020 were discussed; namely to emphasize that the current proposed changes reflect considerable review by the PRCAC and input from the community, but also that there is interest in undergoing a more comprehensive review, starting with "visioning" to update the perspective on growth and development, having an economic development plan, creating a new sub-area plan, and finally new zoning provisions that support the vision and sub-area plan. The PRCAC should start to encourage County government to fund an economic development plan for Point Roberts.

\* Recycling and waste reduction seminars from Community Horticulture & Master Gardener Coordinator, WSU Whatcom County Extension  
Beth Chisholm has set the date for the recycling and waste reduction seminars on 4 successive Thursdays starting on October 22, 2020. The sessions are free. The brochure on the program has been posted on Nextdoor and PAWS. People should register to participate in these Zoom meetings.

### \* New e-mail address for the PRCAC

The issue of getting a new e-mail address for the PRCAC to replace the one controlled by former member Joel Lantz was discussed. SF proposed the address [prcac@gmail.com](mailto:prcac@gmail.com), or something similar if that is not available. SW noted his earlier comment that it might be useful for the PRCAC to have its own website (with its own e-mail address) as a space to post documents as a means of developing and maintaining institutional memory of the PRCAC. SF will register a new Gmail e-mail address and try to set it up to forward incoming e-mails to all PRCAC members.

## New Business

\* County Council's review of Point Roberts' mandatory curbside garbage pick-up

SF noted that the PRCAC sent a letter to County Council in 2019 suggesting that Council make its planned review of the trash level, without proposing specific alternatives to the current level of 26 32-gallon cans per year. AC noted that the PRTA and PRRVA have sent letters to County Council and the County Executive suggesting a change to a lower service level of 12 32-gallon cans per year. She said that the lower level would better suit the need of some full-time residents and our part-time residents, promote state-wide goals of waste reduction and increased recycling, while still providing the hauler Cando with guaranteed revenue.

AC proposed that the PRCAC send a new letter to County Council to request that the service level be changed to 12 variable annual pick-ups of 32-gallon cans, along with continued recycling. SF noted that his own trash costs doubled from the self-hauling arrangement to the current mandatory curbside trash pickup, and that he puts out a full 32-gallon can every 2 weeks. If the level were reduced, his costs, as an example, would go up further. AC noted that her family only puts out a 32-gallon can every 6 weeks. For people like her and for part-time residents, the lower level would suit their needs; others could still contract with Cando for additional pickups. The lower level would create incentives to reduce waste and to increase recycling.

SF asked what "variable" means in this context and was informed that it means the current 26 cans can be put out at any time over the course of the year; 1 every 2 weeks, or 26 cans all at once, or anything in between.

AC noted that the UTC would adjust the rate (cost) for the revised trash pick-up level. It was noted that with the high fixed costs for the hauler, the change in service level would probably only result in a very small cost reduction for the residents.

After discussion of government services that some use more and others less, about 32-gallon versus 20-gallon cans, and about environmental concerns, AC made the following Motion:

That the PRCAC send a letter to County Council requesting that the curbside trash service level be changed to 12, rather than 26, variable annual pick-ups of 32-gallon cans, along with continued recycling.

SW noted that JM, the member representing the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) is not present, and that SW had suggested to JM that there would probably not be any critical votes at this meeting. AC noted that the ordinance concerns residential trash pick-up, not commercial service, so that the CoC's members are not directly affected by the proposed motion. SW noted that Cando is a business affected by the proposed motion, and that the CoC would likely want to have input on the motion, regardless. SW suggested agreeing on the language for the motion, but delaying action to a later meeting. On timing, AC commented that waiting would not give the UTC time to adjust the rate for January 1, if County Council accepted the PRCAC's recommendation in December.

It was noted that the motion might be delayed if it came to a 2:2 tie and the CoC represented was crucial to the decision. Alternatively, if there were 3 votes in favor of the motion, the CoC position would be a moot point.

PS seconded the Motion. The PRCAC members voted 3 to 1 in favor (AC/PS/SW for; SF against). AC agreed to provide a draft letter for SF to review and revise to send to County Council.

\* Selection Process and Schedule for the PRCAC At-Large Seat  
SF noted that his 2-year term as an At-Large member of the PRCAC will be ending in January 2021, that he has not decided whether to seek to retain the seat, but that, in any case, others may want to be considered for the seat. As a result, we need a process to identify the recommendation that the PRCAC will put forth to the County Executive to fill the seat.

SF noted that some have objected to the process used in December 2018 to select SF and in December 2019 to select PS, but having no better process in mind, the same process should be used again in 2020.

SF described the process:

- \* PRCAC gives public notice through PAWS and Nextdoor that there is an At-Large position to fill
- \* interested residents come forward to seek the position and file an application with Whatcom County
- \* PRCAC will hold a public meeting as a "Candidates' Forum" for the applicants to answer questions from the PRCAC and the community

- \* e-mail voting process by local residents and property owners
- \* PRCAC puts forth the top vote-getter to the County Executive for him to make his selection

SF noted that a few people have expressed dislike of the non-secret nature of the balloting process, but that the PRCAC has no mechanism for a secret ballot that also enables us to confirm that there is one vote per person and that all votes come from local residents or property owners.

SW and AC agreed that using the same process as the last two times. SF voiced his support for the process. SW noted this is not a binding vote; it is a mechanism to identify a recommended applicant. AC noted that, if the vote was close, we could put both names forward for the County Executive to choose. SF suggested that might be seen as a cop out and that the PRCAC should.

SF said he would further publicize the process on PAWS and Nextdoor. We can wait to pick the dates for the public meeting and the voting process. AC noted that we could request applicants by the November 19 regular meeting.

\* Letter to Point Roberts from County Executive Satpal Sidhu  
SF summarized a letter to the PRCAC, local civic groups, and the community in general received from County Executive Sidhu, focusing on 4 points raised by the County Executive:

- 1) what are the long-term needs of the Point Roberts community to ensure economic vitality and a thriving community?
- 2) how can the general character of Point Roberts be kept intact?
- 3) what process would bring about consensus where all voices have a place for expression?
- 4) should we revisit how PRCAC works and its relationship with other community organizations?

SF noted that a long-term action item that might improve the image of the PRCAC would be to adopt bylaws for the Committee. SF suggested that getting assistance might help move the process along. AC offered to work with SF on finalizing the draft. SW asked for a copy as well, to make comments.

SF also noted an issue related to the County Executive's comments and would be an aspect of the bylaws which is the composition of the PRCAC; changing its membership structure. SW commented that the bylaws should reflect the current structure, but there could be public discussion thereafter about changing the structure. SW noted that at a recent CoC meeting there was no interest in changing the PRCAC, but the PRTA has been willing to make changes.

AC supported discussion on possible changes, including adding 2 more At-Large members. A large membership could allow inclusion of more skill sets and provide more people to tackle the projects coming to the PRCAC.

SW commented that the PRTA made a list of actions, including finding suitable projects to use the \$1 million in Tax Benefit District funds, making progress on the community priority list prepared by PRTA and PRRVA, and adopting bylaws for the PRCAC. Providing that to the County Executive to show the progress and specific action could be useful.

SW mentioned getting funds for a recording secretary and a website.

AC mentioned the value of contacting the Planning Committee of County Council to stress the need for some level of support for the PRCAC from the County to enable the PRCAC to operate more effectively. And even more importantly, the County should support funding an economic development study as part of the underpinning for creating a new vision and supporting sub-area plan for Point Roberts.

SW made the following Motion (seconded by AC): that the PRCAC send a letter to the Planning Committee of Whatcom County Council before their next meeting to request support for the PRCAC and the Point Roberts community, by providing a recording secretary for the PRCAC, and funding for an economic study and development of a new sub-area plan.

AC seconded the Motion. The PRCAC members voted 4 to 0 in favor.

Tom O'Brien: Mr. O'Brien suggested factoring in to the letter to County Council that all the issues affecting Point Roberts are being compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic induced border restrictions. As a result, the things the PRCAC is asking for are all the more urgent because of the extreme problems created for Point Roberts by the border issues.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.