



Comments on the Citizens for Balance Proposed Amendments

Submitted by Terry J. Harris

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Kootenai Environmental Alliance has had the opportunity to review the submittal by “Citizens for Balance” and their proposed amendments to the 3rd Draft of the Kootenai County Comprehensive Plan. Although there are a handful of amendments with which we might agree, we urge your rejection of this late attempt to derail the process.

Overall, the amendments are counter to the overwhelming input to the current draft, which emphasized protecting natural and scenic resources, rural protection, and encouragement of development where it is most suited. The editorial decisions by Citizens for Balance (CFB) run throughout the document, but it is actually most starkly evident in the Population Chapter, in which CFB proposes to eliminate all of the major findings of Kezziah Watkins, allowing only that “others are drawn to the beauty of our area, continuing to expand our population.”

Amendments offered by CFB are, overall, an attempt to make the Comprehensive Plan vague, loose, and essentially directionless. The Planning Commission has made a significant effort to provide strong guidance for future development and the zoning code to follow. CFB attempts to water down any helpful specificity to utter meaninglessness.

For example, CFB opposes a number of goals, thereby exposing their desire to have a plan that will allow unfettered access to development throughout the county, particularly in rural areas. Examples of Goals *opposed* by CFB:

- P-3 “Promote development that maintains or improves current levels of essential public facilities and services
- H-2 “New development should further the County’s goal to maintain the rural quality of life for county residents.”
- NR-9 “Minimize sprawl by reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into low density development”
- LU-4 “Rural areas should generally be developed at low levels of intensity so that demands will not be created for high levels of public services and facilities. County requirements for housing in rural areas should encourage residential development that is compatible with farming, open space, outdoor recreation, protection of significant historical sites, rural service levels, and generally with the rural character.”

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At this late date, in the land use chapter, CFB appears to promote a “Smart Code” approach to the County’s Comprehensive Plan (similar to a zoning code overlay about to be adopted in the City of Post Falls). Notwithstanding CFB’s clear and ironic confusion of the Smart Code’s *zoning code* approach with the County’s need for a *comprehensive plan*, CFB also fails to recognize the necessary public input and local calibration such an approach would require. Kootenai Environmental Alliance has actually testified favorably on Post Falls’ adoption of Smart Codes, but it is premature to be discussing code development at this stage of the County’s process. Indeed, there is nothing in the current draft comprehensive plan that would be inconsistent with adopting a form-based zoning code if the county chooses to do so in the next step of this ongoing process.

In any event, despite its complaints about “regulatory edicts,” and except for the specific watering down of anything specific, CFB appears to essentially agree with the vast majority of goals stated in the Plan. Rather than adopt CFB’s obstructionist edits, or attempt to accommodate their too-late desires to wordsmith “regulatory” details, the Board of County Commissioners should reject the CFB proposal, and adopt the general approach offered by the Planning Commission’s draft.

Respectfully Submitted,

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