



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes

4:00 PM March 19, 2025
2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

1. ROLL CALL

a. Introductions -

Staff: Gudde, Timmer, Williams

Council: Lenssen, Bode, Mayor Korthuis

Guests: Mr. Jim Obermeyer, and Debbie – Lions Club

Duane Korthuis, Rachel Lucy, James Fritts – Healthy Futures

Calvin and Bethany DenHartog - residents

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of 1/22/25
approved as presented

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. **Healthy Futures:** Duane Korthuis, James Fritts, Rachel Lucy:
Presentation to discuss plan for community center / sports complex
dubbed the HUB for “Healthy, United, Belonging” with the concept that this
facility would be located at Benson Park. This stems from a multi-year
project that has included community stakeholders, the school district, and
local healthcare provider, Peace Health.

The work of Health Futures identified a couple of the most pressing needs
in the Lynden Community. This includes:

- 1) Addressing mental health – especially of school aged children.
- 2) Lack of Childcare facilities.

General outline and discussion points included the following:

A smart scalable plan for community success:

- Address pressing needs – mental health, socialization areas, active places for the kids who aren’t on the basketball team, etc.
- Shift from a large 2 phase building to a more scalable, multi-phase approach.

- Discussion from council on the plan to move forward utilizing a city-owned property, specifically the Benson Park property for a location. The group felt that the community center concept would benefit from supporting park amenities of sports fields and playgrounds.
- The group is proposing a private / public partnership where the city owns the property and facility but it is leased, maintained, and insured by a private entity.
- The committee and the Healthy Futures group discussed funding mechanisms, donor commitments, grants. Council members emphasized that public land can't just be given away (needs to be justified as an serving the public good). Gudde asked if service commitments would be put in place to ensure that Lynden residents would be served rather than the facility becoming one that benefitted out-of-town groups. Availability will be important. Healthy futures agreed that the operator would need to have an agreement that held time and space for Lynden activities.
- Health Futures group asking, at this point, if they can have an appraisal done on the Benson property – for purpose of backing the project.
- The group noted that a non-profit would need to be created to manage the funds.

Conclusions: Committee agreed that an appraisal could be done with any access needed to the property organized through the Parks Department.

The committee asked that the Healthy Futures group put together a written plan which indicates what role the city would play in the effort. Council committee was asking that the plan identify the likely programs and who would run them, indicate who would own the building(s), provide answers and budget for maintenance and insurance of the facility (assuming the city would not fulfill this role).

CDC suggested that the plan that is drawn up

- (1.) Assumes minimal involvement from the City;
- (2.) Ensures that Lynden residents and organizations benefit;
- (3.) Requires the operator to insure and maintain the facilities; and
- (4.) Dictates that structures would revert to City ownership if the intended functions of the facility would cease to operate.

Healthy Futures is invited back to present to this or the Parks Committee after the appraisal and plan have been completed.

b. Comprehensive Plan Early Draft Review Part 1 of 3

The Committee discussed the draft sections distributed in the meeting package. Staff collected feedback at the meeting as well as written comments. These sections included:

- 1) Vision
- 2) Health and Wellness
- 3) Climate Resiliency

Lenssen expressed appreciation that discussion about the city character included mention of wide streets but indicated a distaste for terminology he described as 'buzz words' and asked that staff 'tone down' some sections. Generally, the Committee expressed concerns that the State would use the goals and policies against the city.

Staff indicated that these same portions were previously reviewed by the Advisory Group and will be going to the Planning Commission on March 27th. Future CDC meetings will include review of the Housing and Land Use sections, as well as the Transportation Element and the Capital Facilities Element.

c. Review Street Naming Process:

Jim Obermayer, a member of the local Lions Club, joined the CDC to request that the city implement a street naming to policy which would recognize Lynden military veterans who have been killed in action. Obermayer provided the committee with several examples of cities across the United States that have implemented such policies, images of street signs that recognize the Veterans, and a list of names of the 39 Veterans from Lynden who had been killed in action.

Staff briefly discussed the current process of street naming which relies on developers to choose street names when they proposed / build new streets. These names need to be cleared by our 911 dispatcher, WhatComm, to ensure that chosen names are not similar to existing street names within Whatcom County.

Committee did not support a policy which would rename existing streets but indicated support for naming streets after Veterans if they were selected by the developer. Staff provided in the meeting package a list of proposed street names which is maintained by the Community

development Department and offered to add the names of the 39 Veterans to this list with some background information as provided by Mr. Obermayer.

Conclusions: CDC asked that staff add the Veteran name list to the proposed street names list and post to the city's website.

Safe Cities: Obermayer also wanted to discuss with the Committee the crime rate in Lynden. He noted that when he moved to town his real estate agent told him that Lynden was the 5th safest in the State. 2024 rankings by the same group, SafeWise.com, put Lynden as 19th in the State. Obermayer provided numbers regarding property crimes, violent crimes in the city. Obermayer asked the Council members to continue to prioritize arrest and prosecution for criminals – even small crimes.

Committee discussed how the rankings are created and what factors influence crime statistics. Mayor Korthuis asked Obermayer to review the city-specific stats linked on the city's website to see if they correlated with the stats he was seeing elsewhere.

- d. **Private Streets:** Council wishes to have further discussion on private street standards, liabilities, approvals. Lenssen provided the group with a handout with some of his thoughts on private streets and examples throughout the city. He mentioned the potential proposal of additional standards or identifying new criteria for when a private street could be utilized.

Conclusions: John Williams to review request and assign private street research to staff as needed ahead of future council committee meetings.

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Residents Calvin and Bethany Denhartog joined the Committee meeting to discuss an ongoing concern in their neighborhood on East Front Street. The plat, Miracle Ridge, included several phases. Bethany presented a detailed history of the annexing, platting, and development of that that property where her and her family have lived for some time. Their concern focused on the agricultural property south of their lot and the potential for this area to accommodate additional residential development. Expressed their desire for this area to remain as farmland and strongly protested 2021 efforts here to short plat (this plat application was withdrawn). Bethany asked that the Committee and

Council as a whole take actions to prevent development of this neighboring property.

Conclusions: City Administration to discuss the DenHartog requests with legal counsel.

Next Meeting Date: April 23, 2025