

**Meeting Notes**  
**Henry's Fork Watershed Council Conference**  
**November 14, 2006**

The Henry's Fork Watershed Council meeting began with introductions followed by community building. Dale reflected on the early years of the Council and how difficulties were overcome by communication. He encouraged everyone to use community building as a time to speak your mind and trust that the relationships built through the Council uphold trust and respect for one another. Dave commented on the Council's first meetings and how these past few months TNC, HFF and FMID have been able to work through a difficult and sometimes contentious MOU on the Henry's Lake Outlet in the spirit of the Council. Sometime in the next few weeks the MOU will be signed and another cooperative effort will have been made for the benefit of the resource.

Jennifer Boyer from the Sonoran Institute was the first speaker on the agenda. Jennifer spoke to the group about what land use planning is and what it can accomplish. She told the Council that planning for the future is about organizing the use of lands and resources while supporting the needs of the people. This involves many different disciplines including environmental needs, spatial planning, urban design, architecture, transportation needs, cultural aspects of the community, aesthetics, and others. Land use planning also involves statutes outlined by the state as well as plans developed by each county. These plans are very important tools for managing growth setting forth the codes and regulations for the future.

Jennifer shared ideas that the Sonoran Institute promotes for helping communities deal with rapid growth. Each one promotes a community-based approach. They are: developing a broadly-shared vision, understanding economics in a global market, identifying the natural and cultural assets of a community, using tools that reflect local values, and identifying leadership and community-minded individuals from within the community. This is a process of engaging people in constructive dialogue and learning to capitalize on the good things identified by diverse interests. It means gathering important information and educating people on effective planning and involving them throughout the process.

Finally, Jennifer discussed several examples from communities in Montana. Some of these cases are of well thought out planning where the character and appeal of the community have been preserved while allowing for growth. Others reveal how a lack of cooperation among residents and lack of vision results in growth by default rather than growth with purpose. The key is a visioning process that involves the community and connects the land to the people with the future in mind.

Next on the agenda was Joshua Chase from Fremont County Planning and Zoning. Joshua gave the group an overview of the County's Comprehensive Plan and outlined how the Plan guides policies for development and growth. Joshua explained the planning act requirements as outlined in the document and gave a brief description of the crucial elements.

He spoke to the group about the process of revising the document and the public input process. Joshua briefly covered the policies of the plan including cooperation between the county and cities and the need to create impact areas, public transportation, public safety and investment in roads, and property rights. He also talked about specific policies zoned as Island Park, Ashton, and St. Anthony. This is necessary because of the vast diversity of Fremont County. The county is planning to make the Comprehensive Plan available to the public on the Internet soon.

Jeffrey Patlovich from the Fremont County Planning office spoke to the group briefly before the break-out sessions. He said the county hopes to have the plan done in approximately 18 months. Since they are currently in the public input portion there is still a lot of work to do. The county will be holding meetings

over the next several months to gather input and data and hopes the public will get involved in this process. The final plan will be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for adoption.

The group reconvened after dividing into two groups to answer questions collectively. The first question was: How can the community best participate in the planning process? The following is an abbreviated list of the outcomes.

- Although it was agreed that there is a great need for public involvement, the challenge will be to get people to come to meetings and get educated and involved in the process. Most thought that group collaboration has better outcomes than mailed surveys; however, if time was invested in an extensive media campaign and the public was informed of the issues and had an understanding of the plan, the time might be well invested.
- There is a need for a long-term vision. If it were possible to link the broad vision to the public personally, the vision and participation would unite.
- It is important to utilize civic groups and advisory groups like chambers of commerce and Rotary clubs. These groups are already organized with specific meeting schedules and can be tapped into as the public process continues.
- Perhaps as the county finishes putting the plan online, accommodations can be made so the public can respond via email.
- Make special invitations to people who have experience in land use planning and/or give people special assignments pertaining to the plan revision.

What changes would you like to see in the current plan to change, redirect, and/or affect issues concerning community?

- Set up the regulatory process so that if one issue is addressed it is consistent throughout the development process.
- With imminent growth in mind, density is an important issue. Urban sprawl, agriculture, wildlife corridors and open space need to have intense consideration. It follows that, we should steer growth so that there are incentives for smarter growth and preserving our small towns.
- Work together with developers. Create ways for developers to assume costs that would otherwise be passed on to taxpayers. Planning specialists and other experienced people could be brought in to help explain marketing incentives and to help developers understand the importance of this to them, people moving here, and property values overall.
- Maintain riparian corridors; build in creative incentives that benefit developers and the public aesthetically. An example of this would be developing next to a Forest Service boundary.
- Devise a sunset clause on subdivisions so that progress is made or the land reverts back to its original land use.
- We need to be sensitive to development in areas prone to high water table flooding. Maybe there is a possibility to develop better mapping and educate the public and builders about these areas, especially where agricultural uses change ground water regimes.

What attributes and qualities do you want to see maintained or enhanced in the future? What makes this place special?

- Planning process should take into account all the reasons that people moved here in the first place. Fremont County has abundant wildlife, fish and botanical resources. We need to preserve the cultural, visual, and natural values that attract people to this area.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.