Public Participation in Port Orchard —Before It’s Too Late!

-Development Director Nick Bond

Washington State has broad and robust requirements for public participation in rule making, long range planning, and in approving development. The City is required to provide the public with notice of proposed actions requiring land use permits. It is common for public hearings to be held in Port Orchard during which little to no public comment is offered. It is also common for citizens to request changes to the City’s regulations or to file complaints about development activities which have been approved. In some cases this can be attributed to residents and property owners being unaware of a proposed action, even though the City has complied with public noticing requirements.

Currently, the City provides public notice in a variety of ways. The official paper for the City is the Port Orchard Independent. Within each issue of the paper is a public notice section in which every official public notice will be published at least once. For site specific projects, in addition to publishing notice in the newspaper, the City will post a public notice at the site and will mail notices to property owners whose property is located within 300 feet of the property on which a project is located. Note that this notice is mailed to the address of the property owner registered with the Kitsap County Assessor’s office. Tenants of properties are not likely to receive notice through direct mailing efforts. It is important for citizens who wish to be in the loop to regularly check the public notices section of the newspaper to ensure that they don’t miss an important notice concerning a proposal that might affect them.

Depending on the type of action proposed, the window for providing comment on a particular proposal may be short, sometimes as little as 10 days though generally longer for site specific projects. If you are concerned about a particular proposal, it is important that you inquire and/or provide public comment in a timely manner to ensure that your feedback is considered as part of the decision making process. Failing to provide comment in a timely manner could affect your ability to appeal a decision after it has been made.

Many of the requests that the City receives for regulatory changes as well as the complaints that the City receives concerning project approvals could be headed off through greater participation in the City’s planning processes. Public participation in developing the City’s Comprehensive Plan can be either proactive or reactive. Proactive participation occurs early in the process of the city’s plans development. Any input received at this stage is considered and incorpo-
rated into the draft plan. Once a draft plan has been written, an opportunity for reactive participation exists for commenting on the proposed plan. Making substantial changes to a plan at this later phase in the process can be more difficult in the absence of broad public support.

The City is currently working to develop the 2016 periodic update to its Comprehensive Plan. This plan will impact the updates to the City’s regulatory structure and future development patterns including the types of projects that can be located throughout the city. This is a great time for citizens, property owners, and other stakeholders to proactively participate in the City’s process. The process which is underway will lead to the development of a draft update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Numerous public hearings will be held on the draft plan in the coming months. At those hearings, citizens will be able to provide testimony on the draft plan, but may have less of an ability to shape the plan. As such, the City would like to invite public input on the development of the Comprehensive Plan update which has been discussed at recent public meetings. An online survey can be taken by clicking here: [http://goo.gl/6J423m](http://goo.gl/6J423m).

Taking this survey is one of the best ways to provide the City with input on the direction that you’d like the City to take moving forward. While projects and rule changes will continue to be proposed, the Comprehensive Plan is the tool that will help to ensure that those proposals are consistent with the City’s vision for the future.

**Fireworks Safety Tips**—Fireworks during the Fourth of July are as American as apple-pie, but did you know that two out of five fires reported on that day are started by fireworks, more than for any other cause? The good news is you can enjoy your holiday and the fireworks, with just a few simple safety tips:

**PROCEED WITH CAUTION!**
- Leave fireworks to the professionals.
- Do not use consumer fireworks.
- The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public display conducted by professionals.
- After the firework display, children should never pick up fireworks that may be left over, they may still be active.

**FACTS**

- Consumer fireworks include sparklers and firecrackers. The tip of a sparkler burns at a temperature of more than 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit, which is hot enough to cause third-degree burns.

- Each July Fourth, thousands of people often children and teens, are injured while using consumer fireworks.

- The risk of fireworks injury is highest for children ages 5-19 and adults 25-44.

- Nearly 90% of emergency room fireworks injuries involve fireworks consumers are permitted to use.