Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Listening Session Notes

**May 26, 2021**

Attendees: Aaron Scheff (DEQ), Ed Hagan (DEQ), Albert Crawshaw (DEQ), Valerie Greear (DEQ), Lance Holloway (DEQ), Mike Reno (CDHD), Jen Schneider (BSU)

**What is and isn’t working well with the existing Zoning Ordinance?**

Ed said he would like the County to limit new wells and septic systems as a means of improving water quality. He said he would like to see new development connect to centralized water and sewer systems wherever possible.

Aaron agreed with Ed’s comments on limiting new wells and septic systems.

Ed noted that while only IDWR can regulate wells, the County has the ability to require properties to connect into municipal water systems prior to developing.

Ed said that if a property has existing irrigation water rights, it should be required to continue utilizing irrigation water for landscaping when it develops, rather than using municipal water which needs to be treated first.

Aaron agreed with Ed’s comments on requiring properties to use irrigation water when available, and also said he would like to see the County encourage developers to design gray water systems to reuse water.

Jen said the Treasure Valley has good water quality currently, and good aquifer recharge due to its agricultural lands, but would like the County to take steps to ensure there is adequate aquifer recharge going forward as development occurs. She noted that increases in impervious surfaces and higher temperatures could negatively impact water quality in the future.

Aaron agreed with Jen’s comments and said he would like the County to consider protecting and setting aside basins for future aquifer recharge. He noted that as more agricultural lands are developed less recharge would occur.

Ed noted that Elmore County is currently developing aquifer recharge basins and that the County could reach out to them for more information. He also said that aquifer recharge basins could be tied into parks and open space areas.

Jen noted that IDWR had good data pertaining to aquifers in Ada County, and recommended the County reach out to them for more information.

Ed said the Ground Water Monitoring Technical Committee, the Treasure Valley Modeling Technical Advisory Committee and Sean Vincent at IDWR would be good resources regarding aquifer recharge basins. He said the location of the basins would be important, as recharge basins located too close to a river would not allow water to reach deeper aquifers.

**Are there any uses that are a concern, or that the Zoning Ordinance should do a better job of accommodating?**

Ed said that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) have the potential to negatively impact water quality and suggested the County work with the CAFO Site Advisory Team, comprised of DEQ, IDWR and the State Department of Agriculture, in finding suitable locations for them.

Aaron said he would like the County to encourage more water efficient landscaping, and fewer lawns, due to the amount of water required to maintain them. He noted that some HOAs require lawns in front yards.

Jen suggested the County incentivize water-efficient landscaping rather than regulating it, due to it being a potentially contentious issue.

**Are zoning application processes meeting the needs of staff and the development community?**

Aaron said the County’s current application transmittal system seemed to be working well, and that DEQ reviews proposed developments to determine when nutrient pathogen studies would be necessary.

**What should the primary outcome of the Zoning Ordinance update be?**

Aaron said he would like the County to require as much new development as possible to connect to centralized sewer and water systems.

Ed said he would like the County to consider Delineated Source Water Protection Areas when reviewing development proposals to ensure they do not have a negative impact on ground water. He said it was important to protect surface areas which feed into aquifers, and noted that the City of Meridian had been doing good work protecting the supply of water into the aquifers used by its wells.

Jen said that as we can expect more flooding in the future due to climate change, it is important to limit new development along the Boise River in order to prevent future damages.