

August 16, 2022

Bonner County Planning Department
1500 Highway 2, Suite 208
Sandpoint, ID 83864

Re: Comments on the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan

I am writing to offer some general comments on revisions to the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan and the process that you are currently leading. Our community is grappling with a multitude of complex issues related to population growth, climate change, affordable housing, transportation, education, and natural resources, among others.

You are leading a governmental process that will have significant, long-term and permanent impacts on the current and future residents of Bonner County and the County's natural and cultural resources. The comprehensive planning process offers a tremendous opportunity to create a collaborative, proactive and positive vision and plan for our collective future.

Planning Process and Public Involvement

I am a newcomer to this effort but have professional experience with planning and public involvement. My recommendations related to this comprehensive planning process follow:

- 1) hire a well-qualified professional planning consultant to assist with development of the plan and to plan and facilitate public involvement;
- 2) seek grant opportunities to help fund the comprehensive planning process (perhaps similar to what was done in Driggs, Idaho)
- 3) create a meaningful and transparent public involvement plan and process that *educates and actively engages* residents, public agencies and tribes through a variety of methods and forums;
- 4) identify and incorporate current data and mapping resources for all planning elements;
- 5) be open to learning about best practices and new ideas, and
- 6) Slow the process down!

Incorporate Climate Change

Additionally, I request that climate change impacts and response be seriously considered and incorporated into every element of the comprehensive plan. Climate change is the most serious issue we face on the planet and the consequences in Bonner County will be even more dire if we don't take time to plan for how we can collectively contribute to the solution and for how we will collectively adapt.

Our climate is rapidly changing and the effects are already being felt in Bonner County. We are experiencing population growth in part from new residents who are migrating away from drought- and wildfire-prone areas with the belief that north Idaho is somehow immune from climate change impacts. A few examples of local climate change impacts include hotter and drier summers; extreme storm events; increased windstorm, wildfire, flooding, lightening and precipitation/hail risk to private and public property; shorter snow seasons, winter rainstorms, and reduced snowpack; degraded water quality and reduced and altered stream flows; loss of soil and degraded soil quality; physiologic stressors to plants, fish and wildlife that impact

habitat quality and contribute to disease; public health hazards resulting from wildfire smoke and extreme heat events; and year-round economic impacts to tourism related to all of the above.

Climate change will continue to impact our local lifestyle and our economy in ways that we can foresee and in ways that we can't. The comprehensive planning process offers an opportunity to responsibly and proactively plan for the known and unknown climate change risks while we still have time.

Thank you for volunteering your time to lead this effort and thank you for considering my comments and recommendations.

Respectfully,

Mary Wilkosz