City of McCleary
Home of the McCleary Bear Festival

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STAFF REPORT

To: Planning Commission
From: Busse Nutley, City Administrator
Date: December 9, 2008
Re: M & M Harbor Properties, LLC: Comprehensive Plan Change from Single Family to Multi-family Residential, and Rezone from C-3 (Highway Commercial) to R-2 (Multi-family Residential)

The property is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of McCleary Road and Mox Chehalis Road. It is the furthest eastern property in the City, adjacent and south of McCleary Road. Properties to the east are designated by County zoning as General Residential (R-2), and at this time, only single family houses exist on those properties. The County zoning allows single family and duplex uses outright, while multi-family is allowed by Conditional Use. North of McCleary Road the land use is single family residential with a new subdivision directly north, and older single family homes west of S 2nd Street. To the west the property is zoned R-3 and commercial uses are already established. Further to the west is the McCleary School.

Mox Chehalis Road is the main access from SR8, with both east and west-bound entrance and exits ramps. There is another entrance/exit (without ramps) for McCleary approximately one-mile to the west.

Because of the location of the freeway ramps, the intersection of Mox Chehalis Road and McCleary Road is a significant entryway/gateway into the City.

The property was annexed into the City on March 13, 2002 and was given the zoning designation of R-C, Residential-Commercial. On September 25, 2002 a new comprehensive land use plan was adopted, giving the property a single family residential classification. After Planning Commission and City Council hearings in 2006, a new zone was created for Highway Commercial (C-3) uses, and this property, and others bordering Mox Chehalis Road, were rezoned. Little background information can be found in City files; however, based upon Planning Commission minutes and the zoning description itself, it appears that the primary consideration for applying the C-3 zone is the property's "exposure" to SR8.

The purpose of the C-3 zoning district is found in McCleary Municipal Code 17.16.040(F):

> "The highway commercial (C-3) district provides for highway-oriented or vehicle-oriented uses that can benefit from highway exposure. Residential uses are not permitted."

In 2002 the comprehensive land use plan contemplated that the best land use for this property would be single family residential, although the County zoning immediately to the east was designated for General Residential uses that also include multi-family dwellings allowed by Conditional Use.

The site, however, is located along a major arterial, Mox Chehalis Road, and certainly lends itself to the commercial zoning that was provided in 2006.

Changes in Conditions and/or New Information

In order to change the comprehensive land use plan, it should be shown that there are changes in either circumstances or other information about the site. There is now a significant change in that the property owner has had competent consultants prepare a wetland delineation. The report found that a considerable amount of the site is unusable due to the presence of a wetland and the required buffer from development. The wetland divides the property and the remainder of useable property at the corner of Mox Chehalis and McCleary Road is too small for most commercial developments. In fact, the applicant is proposing that the property be left in open space together with the wetland and its buffer.

This means that the only property that can realistically be developed is the southern portion that borders the freeway on/off ramp. Access to the area must cross the wetland in the least detrimental manner, and be of a sufficient distance from the intersection of the two arterials. By these criteria, access must be constructed at the northeast corner and along the eastern border of the property.

Recommendation

Because of the inconsistency between the comprehensive land use plan and the zoning, a full range of residential and commercial land uses are possible for this property. It is critical, then, to look at the property itself to determine the best use.

Although the southern portion of the property has the best visibility from the on/off ramp, the facts that only the southern part of the property can be developed and that access can only be located at the northeast corner of the property, present arguments against commercial use. Highway Commercial zoning envisions quick and easy access for the traveling public.

The property is bordered on two sides by arterials and on one side by a freeway on/off ramp. This transportation setting indicates that traffic counts are already higher than those expected for single family residential, and would usually indicate that the best use

should be commercial. However, the northern portion of the property is unusable and the lot configuration and presence of the wetland dictate that access to the southern part of the property must be at the northeast corner and along the eastern border. As stated above, this access problem makes commercial use problematic.

Although there are single family homes adjacent to the west and across McCleary Road to the north, transportation issues such as high traffic volume and noise also make the property a difficult single family residential site.

After considering all these issues, the staff collectively is recommending that the property be planned and zoned for multi-family residential use. Both McCleary Road and Mox Chehalis Road can handle the traffic generated by an additional 30 units. The access into a multi-family area could be by driveway, minimizing roadway width requirements and therefore, impacts to the wetland. Although the dwelling units would be located near the on/off freeway ramp, noise could be reduced through appropriate landscape screening. This also could enhance the view to the traveling public as they enter the City.

Attachments:

1. Comparison of zoning land uses: R-1, R-2, C-3, Old R-C, County R-2
2. Combined City and County zoning map
3. Application Form and Letters from Applicant
4. Preliminary/Concept Site Plan
5. SEPA Declaration of Non-Significance (DNS), SEPA Checklist
6. Wetland Delineation