Latah County Planning Commission
Minutes, 21 January 2003

Planning Commission [PC] Members: Skyler Schlueter [SS], John Hunt [JDH], Suvia Judd [SJ], Kathleen Warnick [KW], James Smith [JS], Janet Hohle [JH], Louise Barber [LB]; Planning Director, Michelle Fuson [MF]

Present/Absent: SJ, KW, JS, LB present; SS, JH, JDH, absent. Staff: MF.

Packet Material: Latah County Ordinances with proposed changes, draft of articles 1-9; letter and material regarding lighting from Stu Goldstein; hand-out of minutes from 1/7/03.

Meeting: Minutes of 1-7-03 accepted with corrections; Nancy Becker (North Central Health Department) will be present for the Feb. 4 meeting to discuss FEMA issues.

Stu Goldstein [SG] and Bill Kochman [BK] (who has advised the city on lighting) were introduced. SG would like PC support for an outdoor lighting section in the ordinances; he read his letter. JS questioned why coming before the county when the city "outshines" the county, and that any ordinance would have to involve the city to be meaningful. SG responded that he is a resident of the county and he would appreciate "company" to go to the city to reduce its light pollution. SJ noted that the PC has discussed lighting, but that we never finalized an approach. Would SG's thought be that an ordinance would apply to every new home? to subdivisions? to commercial establishments? SG replied that the problem will only get worse, and that if we only could resolve the problem of future lighting, it would be a start. JS noted that security lights are a huge problem and are heavily promoted by the power companies; SG said that these are an important issue; technology exists for shielded, greenish tinted, and money-saving lights.

BK introduced some facts: U.S. is 5% of world's population, uses 25% of its energy, and of that, 20% is wasted; 5% of that 20% is outdoor lighting – the yard light being the worst design (125 watts when 75 or less would do). There has been in Moscow since 1986 a loss of 1 plus magnitude of brightness of visible stars due to light. (There are "Dark Sky" preserves being set up elsewhere -- Prineville, Mauna Kea, Hawaii, etc.). Mercury lights are the worst offenders; although sports facilities must light with blue, or mercury lights, so balls can be seen; car dealerships, however, don't need them. Additionally, cleaner air results from savings in electric output.

Regulations, to start with, for new construction and commercial areas are feasible for PC to contemplate; prohibit mercury lights (125 watts) and require replacement with high-pressure sodium lights (75-100 watts); require sharp cut-off design and timers. Noted that low-pressure sodium lights are optically unsatisfactory. SJ: building ordinances have energy savings measures, so a requirement like this is within bounds. The City of Moscow is working on a lighting ordinance, supposedly all new buildings and street lights; there seems to be "intermittent receptivity," but there is no ordinance yet. County, however, has no authority whatever in the city; SG asked only that PC start somewhere. BK will get information on yard lights and report back to PC. SJ suggested that lighting be placed under Design Standards (Article 7); JS that regulation be placed on new construction at the least; MF: these would be difficult to enforce.

Discussion of Article 3: MF noted that Debby _____ (FEMA) will be looking over the PC suggested changes to Article 3 on Feb. 3, and will provide information re. the more restrictive measures proposed by PC.

Area of City Impact update: MF said that the CC have not forwarded their response to the city; they are waiting for Tom Stroschein to weigh in on the county recommendations (the county recommendation was to reduce the size of the area, use the city --or a combination of city/county -- ordinances, but have the county handle permitting and enforcement); Stroschein, however, has some reservations and wants to know if PC would still recommend the same after the public meeting (PC recommended that an application would be made to the city, they would make a recommendation, forward it to the county; PC also recommended a reduction in size). PC: Yes, we stand behind our recommendations. KW: however, we might need more zones. Schedule of events: MF: Five or six complaints still "hanging," so the Area of City Impact renegotiation will have to move quickly. County attorney could deputize the city and move ahead, but city won't act; thus, an impasse.

Next meeting: February 4, 2003, 5:50 pm, **Room 207**, County Courthouse. Elections of PC officers; discussion will continue on articles 3, 4, 6, 7, 9.

Submitted by:_____ 28 January 2003
Louise D. Barber