

September 22, 2011

Robert G. Zimmerman, Mayor

Council Members:

Kurt Goering
Patsy Cudaback
Jim Kamp
Tom Williams
Tony Balk
John Stima
Bridgette Tuttle

City of Monroe
806 W. Main Street
Monroe, WA 98272

RE: East Monroe Economic Development Group Proposal for Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

We write to voice our continuing concerns that you, once again, are putting the narrow interests of Heritage Baptist Church ahead of other residents of Monroe and Snohomish County. The recent decision by the City to do an about face and no longer require an EIS on the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposal by the East Monroe Economic Development Group that would rezone the property from limited open space to General Commercial is another example of ignoring legitimate interests of the contiguous property owners and the broader community.

The decision is cloaked under the guise of a "phase study" which ignores real environmental issues which should be analyzed through a full environmental impact statement as determined by the City in its initial decision to require an EIS.

The environmental impacts of the proposed zoning change are profound and as we have previously documented include the following:

Earth-Related Impacts

- Steep slopes including 40%+ grades of numerous adjoining/contiguous properties; adjoining properties have had a history of slides and erosion which could be exacerbated by any commercial or any other significant development of the subject property.

- Erosion impacts resulting from covering the subject property with impervious surfaces once the development is completed.
- Need for appropriate engineering/soil/geologic studies to determine potential adverse impact on adjoining property owners' from an erosion/slope degradation standpoint.

Water-Related Adverse Impacts

- Any development, including commercial development of the subject property, will have significant adverse impacts on the existing stream and wetlands that are on or contiguous to the subject property.
- As noted earlier, the development of the property will result in a significant covering of existing land with impervious surfaces which will result in runoff issues affecting the stream and the nearby Skykomish River.
- The proximity of the Skykomish River and its sensitive habitat for native salmon and other fish and wildlife species presents a significant adverse impact on the environment.

Animals/Wildlife

- The subject property has numerous birds, including eagles and hawks, as well as other mammals using the subject property as an animal/wildlife corridor.

Noise

- Any development of the subject property, including commercial development, will result in significant noise impacts and disruption to adjoining residential property owners.

Aesthetics

- Any development, particularly commercial development, would significantly affect the views of adjoining property owners without any ability to mitigate the adverse impacts on views.
- Such impacts would result in significant property devaluations for all adjoining property owners, as well as reduced property tax revenues for local governmental agencies as a result of the property devaluation.

Light/Glare

- The development of the property under a commercial zoning classification would have a significant adverse impact from a light and glare perspective on adjoining residential property owners with limited ability to mitigate.

Transportation

- Any EIS should be developed in close conjunction with the Washington Department of Transportation.
- Highway 2 presents serious risks as presently configured and allowing access to and from the subject property would present significant risk of life and health to users of Highway 2.

Other issues that merit serious consideration, before the Comprehensive Plan Amendment is considered, include the fact that multiple State agencies have expressed serious concerns with any commercial development on the property given traffic safety considerations, the impact on fish and wildlife, water quality, and other issues.

We, as adjoining property owners to the property subject to the possible rezoning, face serious threats of our properties' degradation as a result of any development which could result from the zoning change. In addition to the real possibility of losing portions of our property due to erosion and slides, we would face an immediate adverse impact on our property values as adjoining property owners. This, in turn, will reduce property taxes.

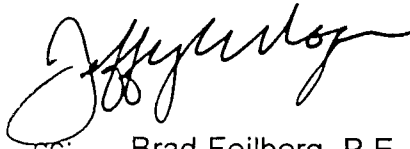
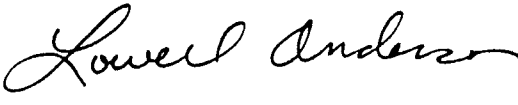
We are also struck that a review of the zoning map for the City of Monroe does not evidence other areas where you have a directly contiguous general commercial designation to a residential zone. We have been extremely disappointed by the fact that our elected officials seem to have little regard to placing a general commercial designation without any buffer contiguous to a beautiful residential neighborhood. We forget the underlying motivation for the zoning change is not to protect neighborhoods or residents within the City of Monroe, but to favor a narrow interest.

As to potential commercial development, there are numerous sites within the City of Monroe available for commercial development. The City is not suffering from a lack of general commercial zoned land. The City is suffering from a lack of leadership.

We call upon our elected officials to look beyond the narrow interests that have constrained their decision-making in the past and make a decision, once and for all, that lays to rest any attempt to rezone the property in the East Monroe Economic Development Group's proposal from limited open space to general commercial.

Very truly yours,

Concerned Citizens on Rivmont/Calhoun

 
cc: Brad Feilberg, P.E.