

Blount County Policies Plan Review 2003

Report of open comment sessions

From Community Meetings October 9 to November 13, 2003

As part of the process for review of the county Policies Plan, the Blount County Planning Department conducted ten Citizen Input Workshops throughout the county from October 9 to November 13, 2003. Citizens were asked to provide comments and suggestions concerning the Policies Plan adopted by the Blount County Planning Commission in June of 1999, in preparation for review and revision of the Plan.

In addition to requesting written comments on the Plan and its policies and implementation strategies, citizens were also requested to participate in an open comment session as the last part of the workshops. This document reports results of those open comment sessions as recorded on flip chart paper at the meetings.

Porter School – 10-9-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 19

1. Address air quality issues also in relation to health and environmental degradation.
2. County should be proactive in planning for air quality, for example in relation to new roads and industries that can lead to more pollution.
3. New roads do not create pollution – more cars do.
4. Cities and other utility systems should have planned for water supply together.
5. County needs transfer stations or convenience centers for garbage.
6. Make composition of Planning Commission more reflective of the range of interest of the county – too weighted to developers.
7. The Plan should guide all planning decisions, especially regarding rural preservation and adequate infrastructure.
8. Concerning rural preservation – voluntary is not adequate – define and readdress – develop indicators to measure (rural) and measure loss.
9. Extreme property rights doctrine cannot allow accomplishment of Policies 1, 2 and 5.
10. Need an enforceable master growth plan 5, 10 and 20 year (time horizon).
11. Is anyone listening? Do comments really mean anything? For my money, I do not get much – services are limited.

12. Create walkable neighborhoods and community – provide the opportunities (for walking).
13. Growth (is a problem) on inadequate roads, for example with school buses.
14. County is not proactive in addressing growth, especially infrastructure – need ability to issue moratoria or use performance standards as conditions precedent (to development) – not now adequate.
15. Provide paid positions for Planning Commission to allow more time for study.

Walland School – 10-13-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 10

1. Encourage zoning to limit urban sprawl & protect rural land.
2. Need more greenery in new development & less asphalt – especially along Hwy 321.
3. For any subdivision, look for adequacy of infrastructure, e.g., roads & schools – 18 foot minimum (width) on roads.
4. If we are to grow, we need places to live – do not discriminate with different types of land, e.g., lowland and ridgetop.
5. Need to centralize development to make mass transit feasible.
6. Need notification of neighbors in subdivision process like (is done) in rezoning.
7. Present residents, and especially new residents, want to close gates of county.

Townsend Visitor Center – 10-14-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 11

1. Building codes needed, especially for newcomers in relation to contractors.
2. Need newcomer articles in paper addressing building codes and choice of builders.
3. Planning Commission appointments are political – stacked. Need to set a certain percent of Planning Commission from different sectors.
4. Need to elicit more professional input into Planning Commission decisions.
5. If laws are already there, why pass new regulations, especially if you are not enforcing ones already there.

Montvale School – 10-20-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 9

1. Building codes are top priority, but it will die in committee.
2. Regulations need plans for enforcement.
3. One person cannot enforce water quality regulations.
4. Need parallel (separate) gray water and septic water systems, i.e., for more stringent regulations.
5. Need drainage plan for all new subdivisions.
6. Protecting natural drainage is most effective drainage plan – keep natural vegetation.
7. Widening of roads leads to higher speed and increased development and more fatalities.
8. If you build them – roads – they will come – traffic – and I do not want them to come.
9. If roads are substandard, do not allow development.
10. Set standards of roads based on density.
11. Impact fees need to be implemented.
12. Widen intersections to allow better turns, e.g., turn lanes.
13. Can constrain development of rural land.
14. Should have one scientist, e.g., hydrologist, or enforcement related person on Planning Commission (membership).
15. Should give tax break to fallow land – doing nothing land (land not in present use).
16. The owner of land should be able to live on that land without control from other people.

Carpenter School – 10-21-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 11

1. Building codes high priority – there is substantial bad building now.
2. Enlarge lot sizes – at least 3/4 acre.
3. Building codes could adversely affect poor people.
4. Need limits on subdivisions and number of houses in subdivision and location of subdivision (crowding).

5. Larger lots lead to more expensive lots.
6. Inspectors can make mistakes also (in relation to building codes).
7. Need more emphasis on litter control and education.
8. Need to offset charge for single household dumping in landfill.
9. Need to cover garbage trucks (all of them) and enforce with sheriff's department.
10. Lack of mowing in medians and sides of highways (is a problem).
11. Deputies need to enforce laws more, e.g. littering.
12. Need some way of planning development around schools, in regards to overcrowding of schools.
13. Impact fees to address development impacts on schools, roads, etc.
14. Would rather see impact fee than wheel tax.
15. Land conservancy takes needed land out of production and taxes.

Friendsville School – 10-27-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 13

1. (The Plan is a) big pie to attack at one time.
2. Septic failures can lead to big problems in the future.
3. Those (jurisdictions) with (public utility) sewer should take initiative and help those areas without.
4. There are grants available for sewer.
5. Lack of sewer is something you have to live with in rural areas.
6. People come here for the rural area and natural resources – this can change with growth.
7. Gravel roads are a problem – why not make subdivider pave it up front.
8. Need park (recreation) plan for whole county – outside cities.
9. Address air quality also.

Middlesettlements School – 10-30-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 9

1. Consider neighborhood sector planning like in Knox County (for) neighborhood plans.

2. Need to increase requirements for septic field materials (for structural strength).
3. Concern about junk on private property.
4. Need building codes and inspectors paid for by permit fees.
5. Need tax increase or impact fee or user fee to pay for what we need.
6. County needs comprehensive plan with capital improvement program.
7. Need consolidated planning (city and county).
8. Need consolidated city and county government.
9. Need to streamline county government, e.g., fewer county commissioners.
10. People in county are not interested (to participate).
11. Need reuse of old commercial buildings.

William Blount High School – 11-3-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 14

1. Hwy 321 in regard to Pellissippi Pkwy extension – do not want Hwy 321 turned into an Alcoa Hwy.
2. Against the RAC zone, especially if Hwys 321 and 411 will become like Alcoa Hwy.
3. Keep rural area rural – that is why we came (or came back) here – needs to be limits.
4. Take action to preserve rural farmland.
5. Need organized development, e.g. through zoning – to set standards for quality of community.
6. Growth is inevitable and necessary but you can limit growth based on capacity to provide services.
7. Can limit number of lots based on school capacity, roads, etc.
8. Big development needs turn lanes (access turn lanes into large developments).
9. By requiring 3/4 to 1 acre lots you can address water quality.
10. Need building codes and inspections.
11. Over past ten years, county has not had adequate long range planning.
12. Get rid of the good old boy system in the Planning Commission.

13. Need to let citizens vote on what they want in Blount County.
14. Need economic analysis of effects of some of these proposals.
15. Impact fees would be reasonable.
16. Should keep development out of flood plains.
17. County has let public down by not addressing building codes in the last four years (since adoption of plan).
18. Need to invite participants of workshops to review results (of workshops).
19. County is in need of comprehensive long range plan.
20. Set up citizen input committee of 12 to 15 citizens by commission district to meet quarterly with planning department to get feel of community.

Heritage High School – 11-4-03 - number on sign-in sheet = 27

1. People need to see that their comments have been accurately portrayed and given to decision makers – publish in paper – have a copy at library.
2. There are some things in the plan that will require regulation, and if it is a desired priority you cannot leave it to voluntary compliance.
3. There were many people against zoning, and governmental regulations can go too far – a lot of those folks are not participating in this process.
4. Without regulation, quality of life will go down.
5. Elevate the issue of junk cars, old appliances, etc. – address with incentives.
6. Reduce regulations (on number) of inoperable cars from 5 to a lower number.
7. Increase it (number of inoperable cars regulation) to eleven.
8. Growth in Townsend and Tuckaleechee cove is too fast and too haphazard.
9. Need to plan for traffic relief through Maryville if Pellissippi Pkwy is not extended.
10. Pellissippi Pkwy will not alleviate existing traffic problems and will create problems on Hwy 411 (Sevierville Road) – need to address existing road problems.

11. In Guiding Policy 3, insert after “limit regulation” the phrase “by using economic incentives”.
12. Find a comprehensive solution to garbage collection and recycling in the county.

Blount County Courthouse – 11-14-03 number on sign-in sheet = 24

1. Set standards for development and how it looks.
2. Preservation of trees is important – also need minimum landscaping standards.
3. Need someone on planning commission from schools and highway department.
4. Heavy traffic and narrow roads is a concern.
5. Change rules of the planning commission to exclude those who have conflict of interest – e.g. realtors, developers and related professions – where such expertise is required, purchase it.
6. Building codes should also include electric, plumbing, etc. codes and it should be done quickly (high priority) – can charge for permit (to cover cost).
7. Need to also provide good drainage around the house and all structures (to protect against damage to foundations and basements).
8. Make sure stormwater plans are done and inspected during construction.
9. Allow alternatives to curbs and gutters and pavement for storm drainage, e.g. porous pavement or bioengineered facilities.
10. Is no growth really bad? (Would like to retain what we have now).
11. We want Blount County to grow – it is healthy – but you need to be prepared for it – i.e. quality.
12. Find a balance if you want to keep the beauty.
13. Need to preserve that which is desirable in Blount County – development can destroy it if you are not careful.
14. We want regulation but not overregulation.
15. Need to preserve some actual nature as part of what we are working for.

16. Do building of subdivisions in phases to allow infrastructure to keep up – e.g. schools.
17. Preserve open space through cluster development.
18. Need master plan for sewer in the county – target areas with existing problems.
19. We ought to have recycling convenience centers throughout the county – privately owned and operated.
20. Add to Objective Policy 1B(2) (purchase of development rights) to include any land that contributes to soil erosion, e.g. steep mountain land.
21. Need lower rate for homeowners (small household dumps) at the land fill.
22. Need to preserve ridge lines.
23. Implementation agenda needs to be speeded up.
24. Planning commission should act in the spirit of the guiding policies.
25. Need review board and regulations to limit large cuts in mountain development – design to limit damage to mountain side (during development and home building).
26. Seek citizen input in advance of decisions – e.g. southern loop.
27. Conflict of interest is a concern in the community.
28. Planning department should prepare studies for the planning commission on effects of growth and how other places are addressing it. Learn from mistakes of other places.

A note on participation and sign-in sheets: There were a total of 151 names on sign-in sheets. There were several instances of persons attending multiple meetings, either to observe or to extend their participation in the comment sessions. Sometimes these multiple participants signed in, sometimes not. About 130 persons actually participated throughout the 11 meetings.