

Jenna Kay

From: Don Steinke <crvancouverusa@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 25, 2023 7:24 PM
To: Karen Bowerman; Gary Medvigy; Michelle Belkot; Glen Yung; Sue Marshall
Cc: Jenna Kay; Oliver Orjiako; Heidi Cody WCA; Cathryn Chudy
Subject: Misleading comments regarding the Public Participation Plan

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From Don and Alona Steinke, rural Clark County
To the Clark County Council and staff

Re: The misleading public comments submitted to the County regarding the Public Participation Plan proposed by staff regarding the amendment to the Growth Management Act.

Hello Councilmembers and others,

For the last three weeks, I've been reading and responding to those comments.

I've already submitted my responses, to be posted on the County website. I used different colors to help distinguish **comments by others from my responses**, but your website program makes everything the same color, so here are my submittals – in color via email.

Don Steinke's responses to the comments received on your Public Participation Plan for the Climate Amendment to the GMA

Comment 1 made by others: The proposed future will be a nightmare.

Steinke's response

We're going to need a lot more electric energy to provide for population growth. The cheapest forms of new energy are wind and solar.

In most of America, the price of solar and wind is already less than the cost of fossil fuels. Furthermore, it has been illegal for 4 years in the state of Washington to build new fossil fuel power plants.

The cost of solar for Clark PUD's first community solar project in 2015 was \$5.20 per watt. Their new community solar project, being built right now at the Port of Camas

Washougal, is only \$1.70 per watt. The price of solar in Clark County has fallen 70% in the last 8 years. Adjusting for inflation, it's more like an 80% drop.

According to Wright's law, the cost of any new technology drops a fixed percent every time the number made is doubled.

The cost of solar will continue to fall at least 20% every time the number of panels installed is doubled, because people learn by doing and because of economies of scale. We have friends with solar panels that provide all the electricity they need to power their electric vehicle. They drive on sunshine. Within 20 years, most of us will be doing that. Our future is bright.

There are now more than 9000 electric cars in Clark County, and more than 2500 roof-top solar projects in operation.

Amazon already has 10,000 electric delivery vans on the road, including some in the Camas area. Amazon has ordered 90,000 more to be delivered as soon as the manufacturers can get them made. Amazon is also the largest developer of solar projects in the world. Their Climate Commitment Arena in Seattle has 1.2 megawatts of solar, and Amazon aims to make that arena Net Carbon Zero and a Certified Living Building.

The five story PAE Building in Portland is a net carbon zero building and certified as a Living Building. They did it without government subsidies. The PAE firm welcomes developers from around the world to tour and see how it can be done. On Swan Island, Daimler-Freightliner is developing electric semis. They are creating a bright future, not a nightmare.

Comment 2 made by others: The Texas Public Policy Foundation is cited:

Steinke's response: According to Wikipedia, The Texas Public Policy Foundation is funded by Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, The Koch Industries and the GeoPrison Group.

They don't speak for all Texans. Texas is the Saudi Arabia of wind, and The Tesla gigafactory in Texas is producing EVs, including Cybertrucks.

Comment 3 by others: The Texas Public Policy Foundation asserts that because of subsidies, the true cost of EVs is much higher than people realize.

Steinke's response: However, the True Cost of GASOLINE is also higher than we realize, much higher. According to the International Monetary Fund, total subsidies for oil last year was \$7 trillion. **For example:**

- **We subsidized fracking technology during the first decade of this century.**

- Congress allocated \$5 billion this year to clean up abandoned oil and gas wells.
- According to the EPA, each dollar spent reducing tailpipe emissions will save between \$10 and \$99 in health care costs
- According to the Fifth National Climate Assessment, required by Congress and published on Nov 14, 2023, weather-related disasters in the U.S. cause about \$150 billion each year in direct losses, and the cost is expected to go up as the Earth gets hotter.
- We've stationed one aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf and one in South China Sea to protect Oil tankers.
- Vancouver's annual Peace and Justice Fair hosts an EV car show, recognizing that our dependence on oil leads to wars. We have spent more than a trillion dollars at war in the Middle east since 1990.
- Taxpayers are also subsidizing carbon capture and sequestration, which accomplishes nothing and takes funding away from more cost effective programs. CCS is a nightmare because of cost.
- <https://www.economist.com/business/2023/05/21/can-carbon-removal-become-a-trillion-dollar-business>

That is taxpayer money that is not reflected at the pump.

Comment 4 by others: The Texas Public Policy Foundation also implies that subsidies are bad.

Steinke's response: Subsidies can be good. **Our government subsidized communications satellites back in the 60's. Now we don't need to wait until midnight to call our kids in Seattle.**

Our government subsidized the internet. Now everything has changed.

Our government subsidized rural electrification over the objections of conservatives.

Subsidies help jumpstart new technologies and create economies of scale. The cost of solar panels installed in the Clark PUD community solar project in 2015 was \$5.20 per watt. The cost of the solar panels being installed this fall at the Port of Camas Washougal is \$1.70 per watt, before tax credits. People learn by doing and the price comes down.

The same applies to batteries in electric vehicles. The MSRP for a 2016 Nissan Leaf with a range of 84 miles was \$32,000. The MSRP of a 2023 Chevy Bolt with a range of 259 miles is only \$27,000 before tax credits, and is union made in America.

Comment 6 made by others: There is no climate emergency.

About thirty years ago, our legislature established the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington.

They recently provided a climate forecast for Cowlitz County for the 2040-50 time period.

They estimate that the average summer temperature in Cowlitz County will be 5.9 degrees warmer. See page 119 in this document.

<https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/s35feqecew9u964pj0jzqd2h7bukscx>

Comment 7 made by others: EV's are unwanted

Steinke's response: Nonsense. Demand for EVs is so high that dealers add surcharges up to \$10,000 to the price. Try to buy a new Chevy Bolt and see for yourself.

Comment 8 made by others: It's also not even clear if the nation has the electricity capacity to handle the shift to a market only selling electric vehicles.

Steinke's response: We have friends with solar panels that provide all the electricity they need to power their electric vehicle. They drive on sunshine. By 2040, millions of people will be doing the same. That future is what the fossil fuel industry is attempting to delay.

Comment 9 made by others: The Texas study doesn't look at the environmental harms of lithium mining which can pollute air and water with heavy metals, massively erode soil, use copious water and energy in mining, and disrupt wildlife habitats.

Steinke's response: The harm to the environment caused by the oil industry is a thousand times the harm caused by electric batteries.

Comment 9, made by others: Don't reduce our freedoms

Steinke's Response: For the last 100 years, the word freedom in practice has usually meant freedom to pollute or the freedom of corporations to abuse labor, endanger others or to form monopolies.

Comment 10, made by the gas industry: NW natural should have executive membership on the Community Advisory Committee

Steinke's response: No, NW Natural should NOT be invited to be on any of the advisory committees. It would be like having an arsonist running the fire department. Although the oil industry is the world's most powerful industry, the gas industry is the most deceptive.

When the City of Austin Texas drafted a plan to gradually transition away from fossil fuels, the local gas company was fast on the scene to try to scale back the ambition of the effort.

They led a letter writing campaign urging Austin City officials to revise the plan asking that the word *electrification* be changed to decarbonization and the expression *electric vehicles* be changed to alternative fueled vehicles. They also asked that offsets be allowed and that fossil gas use be allowed beyond 2040.

Those substitutions are not acceptable because:

Decarbonization of the gas supply might provide a 1% improvement, whereas electric heat pumps would provide a 99% improvement.

Alternative fueled vehicles could run on compressed gas with only a small benefit. EVs provide a 99% improvement.

Carbon offsets are difficult to monitor and often fraudulent.

All of those changes would cause increases in the price of heating and cooling **and lead to public opposition to those plans.**

The American Gas Association said it “will absolutely oppose any effort to ban natural gas or sideline our infrastructure anywhere the effort materializes, state house or city steps”.

No groups that represent fossil fuel interests should be invited to be on any of the committees. That probably means the Chamber of Commerce, Identity Clark County, CREDC, Affordable Fuels Washington and Let’s Go Washington.

In Vancouver, NW Natural conducted a campaign urging their customers to protest Vancouver’s Climate Action Framework.

1) **Completing this public participation plan in 2 months was a rush. Given the magnitude of the task this is simply too fast.** Steinke’s response: This is only a public participation plan, not a broad policy proposal. The public participants will take at least 12 months to recommend an implementation plan. The consultants have done other outreach work for the county. This is a routine process for them.

4) **How can the public weigh in if they have no idea what’s involved, what it will cost and how it will impact their lives.** Steinke’s Response: I agree. I would argue that people on the committees should become knowledgeable about climate science, and the cost of climate impacts. They should also be briefed on heat-pumps. They should be briefed on the learning curves and cost reductions related to electric vehicles and photo-voltaic energy. They should also be briefed about our electric utility resources, and their limitations. They should also become briefed on relevant laws: The Clean Energy Transformation Act, The CA ZEV Mandate, the Climate Commitment Act, the Climate Amendment to the GMA, and the State goals for emissions reduction by 2030. They should also be briefed on the Guidance Documents prepared by the Dept of Commerce for this work.

What is required is a full study that is comprehensive and paid for by the legislature and governor...not be another unfunded mandate. Steinke’s response: The legislature has already funded the Dept of Commerce to do the work, and they’ve been working on it for 18 months. So far, they have convened with 30 agency heads and consultants and they have drafted a list of 150 options for action. This is like a menu. The options will usually have free money attached. Choose what works for us. Nothing is mandated, except the end result. The end result is to reduce emissions and to develop a resiliency plan by 2030.

5) **The plan is required for unincorporated Clark County but what of the cities? How are they involved and impact??** Steinke’s response: The law requires all the cities in Clark County with a population greater than 6000 to do the same work. Camas is publicly looking for other entities to partner up with on the work. Washougal reports that they are working on it. Vancouver started working on it 3 years ago before the law was proposed. Ridgefield and Battleground have not responded yet to my email.

6) Three advisory groups are proposed but only one of them will make recommendations to the Council? That will lead to 2 of the groups going through motions. This has happened throughout government history and won't change now. Steinke's response: It appears that the EJ Group makes recommendations to the Community Advisory Council, which then makes the final recommendation to the planning commission. Would the commentator like the EJ group to make separate and binding recommendations to the County Council?

7) Given that ~15% of the county are classified as minorities why would their representation in the form of various organizations supporting them receive so much attention and power? Steinke's response: The law specifically avoids using the expression minorities. Instead, it references low-income communities overburdened by pollution, health disparities, and handicaps such as are experienced by war veterans.

8) When looking at page 9 -specific measures it appears that the solutions and decisions have already been made but no data to support them: a. Require solar panels for new construction? Solar has low value in our climate. Steinke's response: I agree that solar is less productive west of the Cascades in winter, **but in Clark County, the greatest gap between demand and supply is in the summer.**

The Washington State Department of Energy says we'll soon need a gigawatt of more energy in Clark County. For comparison, the maximum output of Bonneville Dam is about 1 gigawatt. Where will that energy come from? It's illegal to build more fossil fuel power plants. We can't count on solar from east of the cascades because the transmission lines are almost full.

New long-distance transmission lines would be extremely expensive and almost impossible to get permitted. Approximately half of your electric bill is for the long-distance wires, towers and associated lands.

Although the sun shines less here than elsewhere, by building solar here, we'll save on transmission costs.

Local solar also provides resilience in the case of wildfires or windstorms. Indeed, the Battleground School District has already received a grant for solar on the CASEE Center in exchange for a commitment to serve as a community emergency center.

Although solar may have a lower value in our climate compared with sunnier places, that doesn't mean it isn't cost effective. In 2015, the cost of community solar was \$5.20 per watt in Clark County. In 2023, the cost of community Solar is \$1.70 per watt. The price of solar has come down about 67% in the last 8 years, and is expected to fall at the same rate over time as local installers get innovative.

Comment submitted by others regarding solar: "The initial cost, maintenance, breakdown costs, loss of efficiency over time and more make this proposal (for solar) poor and unsound. Steinke's response: New fossil fuel power plants are illegal, Nuclear is extremely expensive. Wind and geothermal are capital intensive. Hydro resources all taken. How would you provide for increased demand?

Comments by Others: Costs? How does this affect housing costs? Steinke's response: Where will we get the electricity needed by newly constructed buildings? We have no other choice. That's why Clark PUD is in talks right now for 134 Mw of solar from a solar developer east of The Dalles Oregon. But we need ten times that amount and our transmission lines are maxed out and extremely expensive to build and take years. We need local solar.

Others: RE Heat pumps: Others says: At 40 degrees F heat pumps efficiency drops and resistance heating (electric) kicks in and is more costly. Steinke's response: I've heated my 2500 sq ft home with a heat pump ever since 1975. The electric resistance heat doesn't come on until the outside temp drops to 25 F. Newer models are designed to work down to -20F.

Others: How much additional production capacity (for heat pumps) will be needed, by when? Steinke's response. We need a lot of heat pumps. But the market will ramp up as needed. Already at least one local company has expanded its warehouse for heat pump work, south of the Post office in Orchards.

Others: RE planning so people can walk or bike to work? How many days of rain do we get per year in our climate? 154 days on average and 42" of rain. How well does that work? Steinke's response: Ask any local farmer or construction worker. 90% of the time, no rain is falling. Ask any local farmer or construction worker. We have apps on our phones that provide hourly notice. We also have rain gear.

Others: re EV's? The costs, Steinke's response. On August 26, I purchased a 2023 Chevy Bolt with a range of 259 miles for \$27,000. We'll be getting a tax credit, up to \$7,500 when we file for 2023. Starting in January of 2024, buyers can subtract a \$7,500 tax credit at the point of sale. Dealers will be reimbursed within 2 days by the Inflation Reduction Act.

Comment by others: re Lack of charging, time of charging and so many more factors show the EV, without a quantum improvement in battery technology, will only be solution for multiple vehicle families and then only for local trips. It's not practical nor cost effective. Steinke's response: Our first EV was a 2016 Leaf with a range of only 84 miles. We drove it 50,000 miles without any scheduled maintenance. By charging it at home, we saved \$5,000 compared with gasoline. We sold it to our son to have as a second car. Our new 2023 Bolt has three times the range, but cost \$5000 less than the LEAF. Clark County currently has 9000 registered EVs, the number sold grows by 50% every year in Clark County. Amazon has 10,00 electric delivery vans (one serving Camas) and is adding them to their fleet as fast as they can be manufactured. Today's Columbian reports that Daimler has donated an electric semi for use in our local Walk and Knock. It's made partly in Portland. <https://www.columbian.com/news/2023/nov/24/volunteers-in-clark-county-ready-for-39th-walk-knock-nations-largest-local-food-drive/>

According to a BloombergNEF EV outlook published in June: EVs sales reached 33% of sales in China, 35% in Germany, and 90% in Norway for the first six months of 2023. And in America, sales will reach more than 1 million this year.

Others: Meeting climate policy requirements will be expensive. • More specifically, the cost of building affordable housing will rise: state and local agencies should have incentives available.

Steinke's Response: They do have huge incentives available, more than a trillion dollars when tax credits are included. In fact, there are so many incentives that Clark County should assign staff to apply for them. Here is some guidance: On Dec 16, 2022, the White House published a Guidebook for cities, counties, states, school-districts, utilities and the private sector for clean energy incentives made available by the Inflation Reduction Act.

RMI has developed a tool to make it easier for cities to find the right incentives for their jurisdiction.

<https://rmi.org/breaking-down-the-inflation-reduction-act-program-by-program-incentive-by-incentive/>

The White House Guidebook can be downloaded here.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/15/biden-harris-administration-releases-inflation-reduction-act-guidebook-for-clean-energy-and-climate-programs/>

Part of that deals with solar

The federal government now has \$7 billion that can go to community solar through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, which was created by the Inflation Reduction Act signed by President Joe Biden in August.

The EPA has said the fund will award up to 60 grants and that it “will prioritize delivering financial and technical assistance to projects that deploy residential and community solar, associated storage technologies, and related upgrades.”

Others: For residents ➤ Increased cost of living will be a likely unintended consequence of climate change policy. Steinke's response: **The cost of living has already gone up because the taxpayers have to pay \$billions to decommission oil and gas wells and to station our aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf and in the Moluccan Straights.**

Others: Electrification is costly. There needs to be a dual system; electrification can't handle everything. Steinke's response: True, we aren't expecting all industries to decarbonize for 27 years. Renewable fuels should be saved for hard to electrify industries. Renewable fuels cost more than fossil fuels and solar energy. Nuclear is more expensive than solar plus batteries. Conclusion, we need solar.

Others: The report notes the high costs, yet offers no substantive or useful solutions. Steinke's response: That comment was made by the fossil fuel industry which has a special interest in no action

Others: Without an accurate cost estimate and a way to pay for the changes nothing should be done. Steinke's response: We want the most cost-effective solutions. For most of America, that is solar plus batteries plus EVs. In fact, they are the most cost-effective resource for energy and private travel.

Comment's submitted by others: To move forward would be irresponsible and wrong.
Would stop economic development: Steinke's response: The clean energy economy means jobs for small businesses. Jobs for electricians, jobs for solar installers, jobs for heat pump installers, substation developers, solar project developers, battery manufacturers (e.g. Wilsonville OR), and EV parts makers (e.g. Photonics in Camas). That's economic development.

Others said: This vision (to reduce vehicle miles traveled) will force people into high density residential. Steinke's response: Those who profit from sprawl will promote sprawl until we have no good land left for farming or for wildlife. A need to own a car drives up the cost of living.

Returning to a comment by others that we need a quantum improvement on battery capacity and charging speed. [Toyota boasts new battery technology with 745-mile range and 10-minute charging time — here's how it may impact mass EV adoption \(msn.com\)](#)

Others said: The green plan is to ban personal vehicles: Steinke's response: No one is proposing a ban on personal vehicles anywhere in the world, least of all in Clark County. However, if we do a better job of community development, the taxpayers will save money if we don't need to build \$100 million highway interchanges to serve sprawled communities, e.g. in Orchards and near the Fairgrounds.

Others have commented: The Growth Management Act is being used to stop rural development – Steinke's response: Every Country on the planet understands the importance of protecting farm and forest land and wildlife habitat.

Comments by others: The Growth Management Act is being used to limit access to energy and other resources for people who do not comply with the edicts. Steinke's response. The sun shines everywhere. I know people who charge their Tesla Walls, and EVs with their solar panels. Vermont has already installed home batteries in 4000 homes and plans to do so in 250,000 more.

Comment by others that there is no Climate emergency: Steinke's Response: The document linked to that claim begins with incoherent nonsense. It says that global warming doesn't cause climate change. Does that mean they agree we have global warming? Are they OK with global warming? Climate change is just another name for global warming.

The science is simple. The temperature drops much less overnight in humid air than in a dry desert because water vapor is a greenhouse gas. CO2 is also a greenhouse gas. Water vapor precipitates out of the air rather quickly but CO2 accumulates in the air.