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Submitted on Fri, 04/24/2026 - 11:11 AM

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Subject

La Center UGA

Date of Hearing

Mon, 04/27/2026

Comment

La Center UGA- Planning Commission Rationale Flawed

Please do not accept the Planning Commission's recommendation to expand the La Center UGA into farm land. I ask this after reading the transcript of the PCs deliberations. The transcript describes a discussion initiated by Commissioner Fadness concerning land recently purchased by the Cowlitz Tribe within the UGA. Commissioner Fadness then makes a motion to recommend 'no' for the alternative to convert agricultural land pointing out that there is a surplus of jobs without the added commercial/industrial land or counting the jobs on tribal lands. This is the correct analysis concerning jobs: there is more than enough potential within the current UGA without including nearby development on the reservation.

Commissioner Haroun counters this by pointing out that tribal land is sovereign claiming that "all tax revenue goes to the tribe" from the jobs and land owned by the Tribe leaving "no" revenue for La Center and other taxing districts. This is not correct but carried the vote to approve Alternative 2. It's unfortunate that staff was not able to clarify with information about the agreement between the Tribe and City.

A bit of history. In an agreement with La Center prior to development of ilani, the Cowlitz Tribe agreed to not purchase and take into trust land east of the freeway because they recognized the negative effect on the city. Recently the current mayor of La Center approached the tribe to change that agreement allowing the tribe to purchase the land they now own within the city. Published reports state that the tribe has agreed to provide revenue to the

City that is somewhat more generous than the City would expect if the land were not in trust. The mayor is also quoted as saying the City transferred roads to the Tribe saving the City a substantial amount of maintenance money. Additionally, the Tribe has the resources and a plan to develop this land, something that has not happened in the decades the land has been available for commercial development.. Therefore, revenue to the City is more likely and sooner with Tribal ownership contrary to Commissioner Haroun's contention.

I would also point out that the Planning Commission did not consider the public costs of development in the area proposed for inclusion in the UGA in Alternative 2. Remember, a primary tenant of the GMA is to focus development to control these costs. The Alternative 2 parcels east of the freeway are isolated and will be expensive to service. There is a proposal to drill under the freeway to provide sewer to these properties, which will be very expensive, while large vacant and underdeveloped parcels within the city limits will be serviced by an already planned sewer line.

Summary:

- The Planning Commission recommendation to adopt Alternative 2 is based on inaccurate assumptions about the affect of tribal trust lands within the La Center City limits on the City.
- The La Center mayor approached the Tribe to modify an agreement to allow the Tribe to purchase and take into trust land within the City.
- The City benefits from the agreement with the Tribe in three ways:
 1. The Tribe has the resources and motivations to develop land that has not been developed even though available for many years.
 2. The Tribe has agreed to generous revenue sharing with the City.
 3. The maintenance burden of City land has been transferred to the Tribe.
- Parcels west of Interstate 5 proposed for conversion from agriculture in Alternative 2 are remote and will be expensive to provide services to.
- The commercial/industrial land within City limits has been available for development for decades but has not attracted viable proposals. This land is unlikely to be fully built out within the planning horizon obviating any justification for the conversion of agricultural land.

