



Jackson Town Council
Teton County Board of County Commissioners

April 5, 2019

RE: Priorities

Dear Mayor Muldoon, Councilors & Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the upcoming joint planning workplan. We appreciated your conversation at the March Joint Retreat, as well as recent discussions at the Joint Planning Commission. We would like to express our support for two key “meta priorities”:

1. Strategic community planning
2. Sustainable public funding for our priorities

Strategic community planning

We were struck by the “priorities” list at the retreat, which included a mix of long-term values and goals (“ecosystem & conservation focus & protection,” “prioritizing community over resort town”), high-level strategies (“town/county cooperation”), and near-term tactics (“direction to Travel & Tourism board,” “human services support and funding”). This confusing list points to the need for strategic community planning, which has come up in many recent joint meetings.

Our community has done great work on planning for the future we want, ever since our first Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) in 1978. We applaud the Town, County, planning staff, and engaged community members for creating and largely sticking to a visionary Comp Plan document. However, we often get bogged down in immediate issues, or in tail-wags-the-dog / squeaky-wheel “planning” based on opportunities (e.g. Hog Island), instead of a far-reaching and strategic view of **what future do we want** and **how do we get there**. The “Growth Management Program” Comp Plan update is an ideal time to develop a pathway to a holistic strategic vision. We hope the update will call for:

→ Establishing clear **conservation goals** and metrics (analogous to the 65% housing goal) and a **Conservation Action Plan** (like the Housing Action Plan or Integrated Transportation Plan). How much habitat, of what types and values, do our native species need to thrive? How much habitat fragmentation is too much? How many impermeable fences can migratory ungulates handle? What water quality targets do we strive for?

→ Supporting collaborative work to **analyze and visualize future development and conservation scenarios**. Can we achieve the 65% housing goal **and** protect enough habitat for our wildlife? We have started working on this and would like to partner with you and other community members to literally paint a picture of what this community could look like in 20 or 30 years, based on the decisions we make now.

→ Creating a **joint commission** tasked with discussing difficult long-range issues like cumulative impacts of development around the valley, public funding for ecosystem protection, future development scenarios, and regional planning within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Protecting the wildlife, wild places, and community character of Jackson Hole.

685 S. Cache St. • P.O. Box 2728 • Jackson, WY 83001 • (307) 733-9417 • info@jhalliance.org • JHalliance.org

Sustainable public funding

The top two “priorities” at your Joint Retreat both explicitly called for funding, and most of the other “priorities” also need funding to succeed. We can’t say it better than the 2012 Comp Plan:

“The community should explore the establishment of a dedicated funding source for conservation easements and other measures that protect the wildlife habitat, habitat connections, and scenery valued by the community. Critical habitat, habitat connections and scenic viewsheds are often located on valuable private land. A dedicated funding source would allow the Town and County to work with conservation groups and private land owners to permanently protect from development and actively steward lands valuable to the community. The funding source could also be leveraged for wildlife protection efforts such as wildlife highway crossings in the Town and County.”
(Policy 1.4.d)

It is now 2019 and we have made no progress (with due respect to the general penny attempt in 2016, which unfortunately excluded conservation). We should create this dedicated funding source and obtain voter approval if needed in 2020. This could be a general penny of sales tax (also funding other community priorities like housing and transportation), an impact fee on development, or could come from other sources. We should also establish a transparent way to spend the funds, perhaps including a “Stewardship Council” to provide incentives to landowners. **Please embark on real community engagement to find out how our community would like to pay for the services we use and need, and for protecting & preserving the area’s ecosystem.**

Sincerely,



Skye Schell

Executive Director

Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance

p.s. Thank you for maintaining County Natural Resource Protections as a top priority, and directing staff to jump back in as soon as the Planning Department can hire key staff. Please also hire consultants to get this over the finish line.

*p.p.s. if you talk about SPET at this meeting, please include a **safe wildlife crossings measure** at the top of your SPET priorities list. Thanks for adopting the Teton County Wildlife Crossings Masterplan. Now, let’s fund and build them – wildlife crossings work!*