

Dear Community Members;

On July 23rd and once again on September 15th, Grand Mound - Rochester Horizons Project hosted round table dinners with community members, business owners and Commissioners Karen Valenzuela and Sandra Romero. These two sessions had the intent of opening discussion with the commissioners regarding the difficulty that small business was having with Thurston County Permitting and the lengthy process when applications were made to open a new business in its downtown core. After the commissioners began to understand the small business owner experiences and frustration with Thurston County policies, we discussed business needs, infrastructure and population.

We are pleased to report that there appear to be some items that the commissioners see as quite easily resolved.

These are:

- “1. Fixing parking in Rochester through the development of a 'parking district, or a code amendment, or ?**
- 2. Working with DOT as they look at/study Highway 12 to figure out some improved pedestrian amenities through Rochester's business district;**
- 3. Thinking about establishing a different development standard for the re-use of existing vacant buildings than for new construction.” *(1)**

An inviting process for creating small business opportunities which could provide service and jobs for our local area is critical. Several of our local folks shared experiences which actively discouraged their plans to locate their business in our town and we are using those experiences to encourage the commissioners to make some changes.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have ideas that could help foster a healthy business climate for our area. We will be holding a third round table session in the near future, and will be looking at how to implement changes to Thurston County's policies here.

Senate Bill 5500 which was signed by Governor Gregoire on May 3, 2010 requires state agencies to consult with small businesses before creating or expanding regulations that impact the business climate.

We wonder if Thurston County could also actively participate in such a process to assure that new or expanding regulations do not have the unintended consequence of negatively impacting small business.

We would appreciate your thoughts and opinions by email as we work through this process.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Brown

Chair

***(1) Commissioner Valenzuela 9/3/11**