

Trail plan comes through loud and clear



Courtesy Photo

More than 500 people attended the standing-room-only event to discuss the proposed open space and trails plan being presented by the Olympic Property Group.

▼ Residents enthusiastic for proposed open space, development project to preserve the North End.

By ANNIE TIETJE
Staff Writer

KINGSTON — Despite a faulty microphone and the noises and whispering of about 528 people, Olympic Property Group president Jon Rose's speech resounded loud and clear Wednesday night — if everyone is interested and will support the effort, they can help preserve roughly 8,000 acres of open space in the North End.

As Rose gave his presentation regarding the different options OPG is examining — either sell the acreage in 20 acre lots or larger sections of land, or develop it with cluster housing and preserving 75 percent forever as open space — the audience broke into applause and whistling at the idea of having miles of trails stretching from Port Gamble to Indianola to Kingston to Hansville.

"There are lot of communities that wish they had the

opportunity to do this before developing their land," said Sandamar Farms owner Julie Gelderman. "We have that opportunity now prior to development."

The meeting's purpose was to examine the possibility of utilizing the Rural Wooded program offered by Kitsap County, allowing property owners with 20 or more acres to dedicate 75 percent of their acreage to open space and cluster development on the remaining land. Rose said at the meeting North Kitsap residents stood to gain a lot from keeping the 8,000 acres as trails and open space.

"I'm just hoping the folks at Port Gamble (OPG) are talking to the (Hansville Greenway) people," said Little Boston resident Nancy Frye after the presentation, applauding the North End community for its work on the extensive trail system. She added the open space is crucial to preventing wildlife from becoming squeezed out of its natural habitats onto human-occupied land.

"I had a bear 75 feet from the front of my house," said tree farm owner Kurt Waggoner. He has 50 acres, 49 of which are dedicated to his farm and open space. "I am concerned about the wildlife. I've seen first-hand in the last six years it actually flourishes when there are food sources preserved for the wildlife."

Some meeting participants had raised concerns the open space, if preserved, would be logged as well as maintained. Waggoner said he attempted to keep a patch

of trees on his land by just letting them grow and not disturbing them. Several have now developed root rot and he's saving what he can and removing the rest.

"In terms of managing timber, it's very active," he said. "There's a process required."

Poulsbo resident Alex Forbes spoke up during the question-and-answer period at the end of the presentation, asking what guarantee there would be the land would continue to be preserved, so after 20 years, other developers, or even OPG, wouldn't come along and take more for clustered development. Rose reassured him the land would be signed over as open space, and unlike other developers participating in the Rural Wooded program, OPG would make sure the space was protected forever, not just 20 or 30 years.

The public will have to do its part in helping fund and maintain the open space, which could cause some to see past the glamour of the project. But many remained thrilled even after Rose asked them to step up and help.

"I'm willing to do what it takes," Gelderman said. Waggoner added she and Kitsap Physical Therapy Silverdale site manager David Damon encouraged everyone they saw to attend and show support for the project. The majority were positive after hearing Rose's presentation.

"Trails beat golf," Rose said to close out his speech.

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