

Audit of county government finds no concerns

State auditor reviewed council complaints from Clark County Citizens United

By [Jake Thomas \(/author/jthomas\)](/author/jthomas), Columbian staff writer

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For months, members of Clark County Citizens United, a local property rights group, have accused Clark County government of misusing funds and excluding input from rural residents while crafting a key planning document.



After getting little traction at the county level, Susan Rasmussen, the CCCU's president, took the group's concerns to the Washington State Auditor's Office, which received the complaint in April.

Earlier this month, the auditor's office reported that it found nothing of concern with three of the group's complaints and advised the group to take up another with a different state agency, said Lindsay Osborne, audit manager with the office's Vancouver team.

"Our audit did not find any concerns," Osborne said.

"I'm pleased with the outcome," Marc Boldt, county council chair, said. "We've heard these multiple times, but it's good to have another view on it for the answer."

But Rasmussen said her group isn't giving up.

"We're going to keep on this," she said.

A matter of public record

In June 2016, the Clark County council approved an update to its comprehensive plan, a document required under the state's Growth Management Act that guides growth in the county for a 20-year period.

While the county was working on the update, both Rasmussen and Carol Levanen, CCCU's executive secretary, testified at nearly every council meeting for over a year in support of then-Councilor David Madore's Alternative 4, which would have allowed for smaller lot sizes.

Alternative 4 was voted down by the council. Since then, Rasmussen and Levanen have sent letters to the editor, emailed county officials and testified that the county left out input from rural residents when forming the comprehensive plan.

"Clark County Citizens United presented testimony on behalf of our membership at every hearing and open house for this growth plan update, going back years," reads an email Rasmussen sent to county officials. "CCCU's testimony reflects the important issues of our membership and wanted to be clear our views were presented."

Rasmussen and Levanen have claimed that they've reviewed the record used to craft the comprehensive plan and have found that testimony, factual reports, comment cards, maps and other input from rural residents were left out.

"It's a couple hundred records that are missing," Rasmussen said. "We are following this up. When one record is missing that sends up a red flag."

Osborne said that the complaint isn't something that the auditor's office handles. She advised CCCU to take the matter up with the state Attorney General's Office, which Rasmussen said she's done.

Other complaints

Osborne said that the auditor's office investigated three other complaints from CCCU that related to the county's handling of restricted funds. She said the auditor's office found no issues.

One complaint alleged that Clark County was directing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funds to the city of Vancouver that should have been used in small cities and in unincorporated areas.

Another complaint from the group alleged that the county misused money that should have been used for rural roads. CCCU also complained that Clark County Clean Water Funds were improperly used to pave a parking lot.

Rasmussen said that CCCU will continue to be active. The group is continuing its legal challenge of the county's comprehensive plan and Rasmussen said they've hired a new lawyer.


"Whatever the auditor decides to do, is their decision," Levanen said in an email.

[Jake Thomas \(/author/jthomas\)](/author/jthomas)





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