

## **County Needs More Comprehensive Plan Revisions**

The Okanogan County commissioners took an important step toward calming the political waters with their recent decision to review the updated comprehensive plan that the previous board of commissioners approved in 2014.

That previous board — made up of Ray Campbell, Sheilah Kennedy and Jim DeTro — adopted a plan update that had been in the works for eight years, and it was immediately controversial. The plan has been the target of lawsuits since then.

In 2016, Campbell and Kennedy were voted out of office, replaced by Chris Branch and Andy Hover. The two new commissioners and DeTro have agreed to consider the plan to see what revisions might be necessary.

Any changes that might be suggested would be the subject of public discussion and hearings. The commissioners have set a two-year timeline for possible revisions.

The comp plan hasn't been completely updated since 1964, which was one reason it took so long to review and revamp.

It's been a long trudge of a process, in part because it's complicated and part because the previous commissioners seemed determined to put an ideological stamp on the document. The new group seems more interested in what's workable and logical for the county's long-term growth and development, and for that of sub-areas like the Methow Valley.

A big issue in last November's races for the two county commissioner positions that were on the ballot was the number of lawsuits generated by county actions in recent years. Many county residents said the commissioners could have avoided some of the lawsuits by being less

stubborn and confrontational — or simply by paying more attention to their constituents.

Hover and Branch campaigned on promises to listen more closely to county residents, and they seem to be delivering on that pledge. One lawsuit against the comp plan has already been dropped.

There are sure to be disagreements going forward. But at least now we can hope for a more open discussion, and transparent process, in finalizing perhaps the most important action the commissioners will take during their tenures.