



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISR 72/22

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, May 24, 2022

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Remote Meeting

Board Members Present

Lizzy Baskerville, Vice Chair
Ryan Gilbert
Nella Kwan
Adrian Lam
Michael Le
Ming Zhang

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt
Melinda Bloom

Absent

Andy Yip, Chair

Lizzy Baskerville, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

052422.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 22, 2022

MM/SC/RG/ML 5:0:1 Minutes approved. Mr. Lam abstained.

052422.2 PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Steinberg, Weber Thompson, spoke in support of the proposed land use code update for rooftop coverage, and possible City Council amendments regarding the Chinatown/I.D., Council Bill 120287 to address zoning fairness. He said he is an architect and principal with Weber Thompson. He said the proposal would be more consistent with other downtown zones and reduce the number of departures needed. The amendment also addresses the needs for elevator overruns.

052422.3 BOARD BRIEFING

052422.31 Briefing by Gordon Clowers, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI),

on proposed land use code update for rooftop coverage, and possible City Council amendments regarding the Chinatown/I.D.

Rebecca Frestedt: A briefing by the Department of construction inspections on proposed land use code updates, as noted during the public comment. She said the work of the Board is guided by the work of Chapter 23.66 of the land use code, and that is the overlay for the Review District, but the underlying development standards are also applicable.

Gordon Clowers, SDCI, said this bill has a relationship to the energy code that was updated, about a year ago. New requirements that have come into effect this year to reduce most uses of natural gas in new buildings. That helps to reduce the carbon in the air, helping reduce our carbon footprint. He said as the city grows, we needed to coordinate the rooftop coverage limits within the land use code. He described a recent proposal in Pioneer Square to allow other new kinds of uses, within enclosed spaces on the roof for rooftop lodging and dining. He said the City was asked to add those provisions to the code and expand those options for the CID, to increase the roof coverage limit and add clarity to rooftop greenhouse requirements.

He described how rooftop height limit was measured and consideration of features that are up to four feet above the roof, typically parapets and mechanical equipment. He said when rooftop features are between four and 15 feet high above the roof, then additional rules about coverage apply. He said elevators are also a special case where SDCI allows between 16 or 35 feet above the roof, depending on the underlying zone. And that's to acknowledge that there's mechanical features that need to be above the elevators to allow them to work up and down, and they need to be a certain height above the roof and there's a certain percent of roof coverage that we allow for these taller features. He described percentages of coverage within the downtown zones for different building types (residential/commercial).

He said the orientation of the code requirements is in relation to the existing buildings primarily and that the code didn't take into account new, taller buildings that could come along in these neighborhoods. He spoke about the rezone that occurred in 2011, which allowed additional building height north of Jackson, in particular. He provided some graphics and visuals of what the changes could look like, showing 35% lot coverage, with a 15-foot set back from the building, including the elevator core and mechanical equipment, and then, a portrayal of the elevator height difference under the existing code.

He said SDCI was approached by Weber Thompson regarding this topic due to a proposed development in the ISRD that would have a need for or a desire for a higher elevator rooftop allowance, due to the speed of the elevator and functionality and difficulty of fitting equipment within the existing height allowance. He said SDCI is asking for board input and feedback. He noted the current zoning considerations related to views from Kobe Terrace Park.

Mr. Zhang said he would like to see the City take advantage of height and enhance amenities for residents. He supports coverage expansion.

Mr. Lam said it's forward-thinking to expand rooftop coverage. He is supportive of the proposal. He said that the high-speed elevator is also forward thinking, but could be too tall, right in the middle of the roof. Screening may help to allow buildings to be sculpted.

Mr. Clowers said the form could be influenced by the Board's review.

Mr. Le asked if the project is only related to new construction or if it applied to older buildings, as well, or would trigger the need to upgrade to new equipment.

Mr. Clowers said that it could potentially apply in a substantial alteration, but existing buildings could be exempt.

Ms. Frestedt spoke to the preference for setback of mechanical equipment from the parapet to minimize visibility from the right-of-way.

There was some discussion about minor communication utility equipment and changes to equipment over time, which can increase the visual impact. Staff said there may be a design to exclude minor communication equipment. Language in the code does direct that equipment be screened and visually unobtrusive.

Ms. Frestedt said this is not a proposal that would require approval by the board. Rather, the briefing is presented as a courtesy raise awareness and give the Board the opportunity to provide comment or get clarifying questions answered or voice any concerns before it advances to counsel.

052422.4 BOARD BUSINESS

Ms. Frestedt provided an update on transition to hybrid meetings starting in June, in response to changes to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). She said House Bill 1329 goes into effect on June 9, which will include the mandate to hold in-person components to future board meetings. She said beginning with the June 14 meeting, the Board will hold hybrid meetings. Meetings will be posted in City Hall, room L2-80, at the lower level, where the Landmarks Preservation board and Pioneer Square Historic board meetings occur. She said that the meetings will not be held at this time in the community, due to capacity for the technology that would be needed to run the hybrid meeting. She said given the proximity to the Chinatown International District, a decision was made, as we started hybrid meetings to hold the meetings in City Hall. She said that could change in the future. Board members can choose to attend in person or continue to attend virtually. She said the Department of Neighborhoods will continue to offer simultaneous interpretation for new construction projects and proposed you know substantial projects.

She said the biggest change will be the switch from Zoom back to the Webex platform, effective June 1, since simultaneous interpretation is now available via WebEx and the program is supported by the City. She said meetings were initially hosted via WebEx, however, it didn't include a simultaneous interpretation, so the Board was given special approval to use Zoom. One obstacle was that the City did not support Zoom, so if there were technical issues, staff had to troubleshoot with no IT support. Once WebEx added

simultaneous interpretation staff was informed that Zoom was no longer allowed. She said she realizes that WebEx is not preferred by the community members, but the City's IT Department has determined that Webex is a more secure platform.

She said in-person attendance would require Board members to show proof of vaccination. There is no mask mandate, although staff will recommend them and make them available.

Ms. Frestedt asked if there are any questions or comments.

Mr. Zhang suggested that the Board either stay all virtual or all in person, for consistency.

Ms. Frestedt said she can't dictate how people decide to attend. She said there are still members of the public and some board and commission members, and applicants potentially, that are still not comfortable with in-person meetings because of health issues and that Covid is still circulating.

There was discussion about set up and visibility of attendees in City Hall for members attending virtually. Ms. Frestedt said staff have been holding test meetings.

Ms. Frestedt said that there had been questions about what projects are coming on to the horizon and administrative review of applications that don't require full Board review. She said smaller scope projects that do not involve new construction or demolition proposals are still being reviewed administratively. She said she wanted to have a brief conversation what kinds of updates would be helpful for the Board about project status.

She said she sent some summaries of what has been most recently approved to the board or to the Chair. She noted that the public may have uncertainty about what the Board's work is in between meetings, noting there is an opportunity to increase overall transparency.

Ms Baskerville said it would be helpful, just to get a report out of administratively reviewed applications from staff to know what's going on in the neighborhood, even though we don't have to go through the process.

Mr. Gilbert said he echoed Ms. Baskerville's comments and that it would be interesting to see a comprehensive list of projects that have come through the administrative process.

Ms. Frestedt said there are several new construction projects in the pipeline. She added that one of the frequent inquiries has do to with security gates and security systems. She described the process for administrative review posting and wondered if it would be helpful to know when the Notice of Decision was posted, as well as the final approval.

Mr. Lam asked about ways for the Board to update the community on its work.

Ms. Frestedt said the role of the Board is to review and provide recommendations on applications for certificates of approval on and that's the mandate that's under 23.66. There isn't really a specific forum outside of the Board meeting, which is a public meeting,

for the board to provide formal updates to the Community. She said that the meeting minutes are the official record of the board, and those are posted as soon as they are available. She said the Board has to walk a really fine line about how information is shared with the Community so that you're not in a position of potentially getting input or being influenced by Community members outside of a public meeting. She said it's okay for Board members, as individuals and private citizens, to attend forums and public events, but to be mindful of how members. She said if there are questions, we should talk about just to make sure that there's a shared understanding of kind of what that looks.

Ms. Frestedt said if Board members attend an open House on a project that you know it's going to be coming before the board it is advised not to comment at that meeting about that particular project so that you're not having public dialog on an active pending application outside of a board meeting. She said if the Board is interested in taking a position on a particular issue that the Board can write a letter, typically from the Chair, about that topic. Other Boards and Commissions have done this.

There was discussion about fencing that had been installed within Little Saigon. Staff said some were reviewed administratively, while others were installed without prior approval and are out of compliance. Prior to reviewing security systems administratively staff spoke to organizations like the PDA, InterimCDA, Friends of Little Saigon and the CIDBIA to see how the community viewed those alterations. She said the feedback overwhelmingly confirmed that, while these are not ideal circumstances...as one community member said, "if it's a matter of that security gate goes up or the business leaves, we'd rather have the security gate and support the business community."

Ms. Frestedt said when reviewing fencing or security system-related proposal, she considers SMC 23.66 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The proposed security measures cannot cause damage to historic materials or create an adverse effect in the district. She said public art, technically, could be reviewed administratively, but that she feels public art is more appropriate for review by the Board due to community interest

Adjourn

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