



---

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
JANUARY 27, 2005  
FINAL MEETING MINUTES**

---

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Anjali Bhagat, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, John Owen, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To

**Commissioners Absent:** Matthew Kitchen, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy

**Commission Staff:** Barbara Wilson, Director; Elizabeth Martin, Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

**Guests:** Martin Henry Kaplan, Commission-appointee; Valerie Kinast, Commission-appointee; Ric Cochrane, Dennis Meier, Department of Planning and Development

**Call to Order**

Chair George Blomberg called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved and Commissioner Tom Eanes seconded to approve the December 9, 2004 Commission minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

The Commission reviewed the January 14, 2005 meeting notes. Since the January 14 meeting did not have a quorum the meeting notes are not formally approved. Chair Blomberg asked that Commissioners please look at the discussion of the work plan from those meeting notes.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS**

**CHAIR'S REPORT**

▪ **Introduction of New Commission Appointees**

Chair Blomberg welcomed new Commission appointees, Valerie Kinast and Martin Henry Kaplan. He noted that the Mayor has selected Ms. Kinast, Mr. Kaplan and Ms. Hilda Blanco (not present at the meeting) as the new Commission appointees. They now await City Council confirmation. He invited Ms. Kinast and Mr. Kaplan to introduce themselves and share some of their background. Both shared information about their professional background and interests.

- **Seattle Planning Commission Analyst Position**

Executive Director Wilson announced that the Seattle Planning Commission Analyst position application process is closing in the next week. Interviews will begin about mid-February soon after the application process is closed. Commissioners George Blomberg, Jerry Finrow and Tom Eanes volunteered to help with the selection process.

- **Upcoming Activities**

Chair Blomberg noted that Commissioner Finrow is participating in the Northgate Stakeholders Group. He announced that on February 9, there is the Waterfront Open House. Chair Blomberg emphasized the importance of this date and that those Commissioners who worked on this project will want to attend.

- **Project Reports**

Center City

Commissioners discussed the meeting with the Deputy Mayor on Center City and pledged to schedule a follow up worksession with the Commission preproject team.

Neighborhood Business District Strategy (NBDS)

Ms. Wilson discussed follow up to NBDS efforts since the last full commission meeting where quite a bit of time was spent talking about the Commission's response to the NBDS. She noted there was a work session last Friday attended by Commissioners Eanes, Quintana and Owens along with Ms. Wilson and that the group is in the process of crafting a draft letter that Ms. Wilson will be sending out via email tomorrow. Commissioner Owen stated that he feels that it needs to be looked at very carefully. Commissioner Eanes recommended that the letter take more of a position on points of consensus. There was consensus that Commissioners will review the draft letter at the Executive Committee Meeting on Tuesday, February 1. The staff report on NBDS and code language will be released February 17.

- **Announcements**

Bio-Containment Laboratory

Commissioner Finrow brought up the subject of the University of Washington applying for a grant for a bio-containment laboratory. Commissioner Finrow feels that at some point the Commission may be drawn into this discussion. He has more information that he is willing to share if any Commissioners are interested.

**2005 WORK PLAN AND 2005 SPC RETREAT PLANNING**

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commissioners make a note about the Center City Strategy contained in the work plan and pointed out that he feels that it would be great to use this at the retreat as an integrated evaluation of how the Commission works. Commissioner Owen responded that he thinks that it should be reevaluated. Commissioner Finrow stated that he

thought the Commission should serve a public advocacy role. It was agreed that it would be a good tool to use at the retreat.

## **COMMISSION PROJECT REVIEW**

### **DOWNTOWN ZONING CHANGES - FINAL EIS**

Dennis Meier, DPD staff, presented a briefing on the height and density zoning changes for downtown. He reported that a public meeting was held on January 13 at which DPD staff responded to questions and comments about the Final EIS. Mr. Meier noted that at the public meeting the zoning changes were positively received. He provided background information on the history of the downtown zoning changes and their origins in neighborhood plan implementation. He stated that the changes are in keeping with the GMA and Comp Plan goals of concentrating growth in urban centers. Mr. Meier described the zoning changes and stated that they include increased height to accommodate more growth. Other objectives are to increase housing downtown, create less bulky development, provide a transition between development intensity between the office core and adjacent neighborhoods, and to simplify the Downtown Land Use Code. He noted that the proposed maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) changes are intended to allow maximum height and density development while generating bonuses for affordable housing, child care, and open space. He added that the primary goal of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program is to generate revenue for affordable housing.

Commissioner Blomberg asked how the windfall created by the change in the code to allow higher buildings and greater density is captured. Mr. Meier responded that the public benefit rests in the TDR and bonus program. He stated that increases in the maximum FAR require participation in the bonus program. In this way public benefits are exchanged for an increase in density. He noted that there is also a public benefit to concentrating the growth downtown and that by capturing more jobs downtown this takes the pressure off peripheral areas.

Commissioner Owen asked how the effects of the zoning changes would be monitored over the years. He recommended that a monitoring program be put in place to see if assumptions about zoning changes and their effects hold true. He stressed that it is important to see if these zoning changes are helping to accomplish the objectives of economic development and affordable housing.

Mr. Meier responded that the resulting benefits are clear in some cases. He cited the new Washington Mutual building which has contributed \$5 million to producing low-income housing and 90,000 square feet of open space for the new Seattle Art Museum Sculpture Park.

Commissioner Owen recommended that the program include monitoring. Commissioner Mimi Sheridan pointed out that landmarks and housing is monitored already but that economic development is more abstract.

Commissioner Eanes inquired about the building step back requirements and asked if the step back can be averaged. Mr. Meier responded that the step back can be averaged.

Mr. Meier shared that at the January 13 meeting there were public comments on historic preservation, bulk controls, heights along the waterfront, open space, the pedestrian environment, and affordable housing funds.

Commissioner Owen complimented the analysis and graphics of the presentation and stated that he appreciated that the neighborhood plans were taken into account in the proposed downtown zoning code changes.

**ACTION: Commissioner Owen made a motion to submit a letter in general support of the Final EIS on the Downtown Height and Density Changes. He suggested that the letter include comments and suggestions about monitoring the effects of zoning changes on density and affordable housing development. The motion was unanimously approved.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Blomberg asked for Public Comment. There was none.

#### **GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Commissioner Sheridan asked that a list of dates for the retreat be sent out. Ms. Wilson replied that the retreat is usually one of the March meetings, and that it is an extended session of about a ½ day followed up by another meeting later at a different location. This year the retreat will be on Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.