



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JUNE 8, 2006 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Sheehy – Chair, Linda Amato, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, M. Michelle Mattox, Kirsten Pennington, Tony To

Commissioners Absent

Jerry Finrow – Vice Chair, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Kay Knapton, Kevin McDonald, Carl See

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson – Director, Scott Dvorak – Planning Analyst

Guests

Daniel Babuca, WSDOT; Lyle Bicknell, DPD; Jonathan Dubman, BetterBridge.org, Chris Leman, Eastlake Community Council; Suanne Pelley, EnviroIssues; Chelsea Tennyson, EnviroIssues; Lish Whitson, DPD; Lindsay Yamane, WSDOT

Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 by Chair Steve Sheehy.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Approve May 25, SPC Minutes

ACTION: Commissioner Chris Fiori moved that the May 25, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Linda Amato seconded the approval. The motion passed unanimously.

▪ Chair's Report

- Upcoming Events and Meetings

Chair Sheehy reviewed the meeting agenda, the upcoming events and meetings. He noted in particular the following meetings:

- South Lake Union Urban Center Plan Update Open House on Monday, June 12, from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at Consolidated Works.

- There will be an Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 13. In addition to the regular administrative issues there will be a briefing from DPD on the PSRC Vision 2020 Update.
- The Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting will be Thursday, June 15, from 7:30 – 9:00 am in SMT 4096.
- The next Full Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 22 from 7:30 – 9:00 am.
- The City Council UDP Committee discussion of DADU legislation scheduled for June 14 has been postponed until June 28.
- On June 27, 5:30 – 8:00 pm the City Council UDP Committee will hold a Public Hearing on DADU legislation – Seattle Planning Commission representatives Steve Sheehy and Michelle Mattox will attend to give the Planning Commission testimony. This meeting will be held at New Holly Gathering Hall.

– **Announcements and Reports**

- Nominations for 2006 leadership positions

Chair Sheehy noted that the next Full Commission meeting is his last meeting as Chair. He added that June is the month that new Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Committee assignments are decided. He continued that the new officers will start July 1.

- Commercial Code-Single Purpose Residential Issue.

Chair Sheehy mentioned that Councilmember Steinbrueck had asked for the Planning Commission's input on a possible alternative to deal with the Commercial Code – single purpose residential issue. Director Wilson noted that Commissioner Tom Eanes has taken a first crack at the response and asked if he would reiterate his points to start the discussion.

Commissioner Eanes recapped some points about the Mayor's proposal from last year and what is currently allowed. He reminded everyone that the big issue the Planning Commission has with the legislation is the method that the Mayor's proposal uses to address the designation of areas where single purpose residential would be allowed in NC zones. The proposal was to map six neighborhoods and include those in the initial legislation with the other neighborhoods to follow. This left the other neighborhood commercial areas in limbo in that new legislation would have been passed and may be applied to them, but wouldn't be applied until the mapping was completed – which could take several months, or even years.

Commissioner Eanes asked Lish Whitson from DPD to join the discussion. Mr. Whitson noted that Geri Beardsley's proposal would address the gap between the adoption of the legislation and the completion of neighborhood commercial district mapping by requiring non-residential commercial uses on arterials and allow single purpose residential development on other streets until some point when specific mapping had been completed for that neighborhood commercial district.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements wondered if one could assume that all arterials in Urban Villages would be where these zones would be designated. Mr. Whitson replied that indeed it would be along arterials in Urban Villages that this designation would make the most sense.

Commissioner Eanes stated that on its face this proposed designation would be simpler to administer but gets to the same place in the end and seems to be a step in the right direction. He added that the only problem that he has with it is the possible unintended consequences that might lead us astray in some areas of the City in terms of the wrong type of development moving forward while waiting for final mapping to be completed. Commissioner Eanes continued that we may need to study this in more detail.

Chair Sheehy responded that his understanding was that Geri Beardsley of Council Central Staff is simply looking for some initial feedback on the concept and that it has not been broadcast too broadly yet.

Commissioner Eanes asked Mr. Whitson if he considered this an administrative improvement. Mr. Whitson answered that he felt it would be.

Commissioner Eanes suggested then that he would support further study of this proposal by DPD staff or Council staff to determine whether it is indeed an administrative improvement. He added that if it is, it would be great.

Commissioner Tony To noted that some of these very issues have arisen lately. He stated that in Columbia City they have had discussions around a particular project that does not have commercial ground floor and does not require it. He added that one of the things that came out is that people did not want an “Aurora” on Rainier.

Note for the Record: Disclosure

Commissioner To disclosed that he is on the board of the Housing Development Consortium who is interested in the issue of single purpose residential.

Commissioner To noted that some of the groups that wanted to have more flexibility in residential developments are the non-profits. He stated that maybe there has been discussion from these groups about potentially allowing an exemption for non-profits to allow them to do residential without commercial. Commissioner Eanes noted that the Mayor’s proposal does exempt low income housing. Mr. Whitson replied that City Council changed that to “existing” low income sites.

Commissioner Eanes pointed out that Lake City is a good example of where commercial strip development is occurring. He asked if the arterials between Urban Villages be released from this requirement. Mr. Whitson stated that they have not really talked about that.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington asked for clarification about what kind of time lag is being talked about. Mr. Whitson responded that it depends on how complicated the mapping process would be which remains to be seen with final legislation.

Commissioner Eanes noted that the objection that the Commission had last year was that only six neighborhoods were to be completed in time for the legislation. He added that rezones can take a long time and he is concerned about that gap. Commissioner Eanes stated that they wanted regulations and implementation to be in sync. He added that this proposal addresses things better than anything else he has seen thus far.

Commissioner Eanes asked about the time frame for the proposal. Mr. Whitson replied that they may discuss it as early as next Wednesday at the next UDP committee meeting and deliberations should end by July 1, 2006. He added that the public hearing would be 30 days from that date with adoption in early October and early November for implementation.

Chair Sheehy thanked Commissioner Eanes and Mr. Whitson. He noted that the Commission will continue to discuss this issue and get back to Council Central staff and Councilmember Steinbrueck with some initial feedback in the next week.

- Tour of White Center and Boulevard Park.

Ms. Wilson noted that community members have invited the Planning Commission to White Center for a walking tour of the neighborhood. The tour will take place on June 19 in the afternoon and will include a walking tour of White Center and a drive through of the North Highline area that is currently under discussion for potential annexation. Several Commissioners have stated their interest in attending. More details will follow.

- Waterfront Concept Plan.

Chair Sheehy thanked Commissioner George Blomberg for attending the meeting on the Waterfront Concept Plan. He asked Commissioner Blomberg to give a brief report on this meeting. Commissioner Blomberg reported that the questions at the meeting were very broad and that there appeared to be a lack of impetus for action. He added that it would be good if someone could demonstrate some leadership. Ms. Wilson added that the Design Commission was also in attendance and delivered the message that they support the Waterfront Plan and that the City needs to be out in front of the decisions that are being made on other projects. She noted that both Commissions have been stating this concern for quite sometime.

Commissioner Clements asked whether Council endorsed the concept plan. Ms. Wilson noted that a few weeks ago it was thought that Council would endorse the concept plan but what DPD is most hoping for is to get Council to release the budget proviso so that they can move ahead with their RFQ for the Public Realm Plan. She added that according to Council UDP chair, Peter Steinbrueck, Council will be doing that.

Commissioner Clements stated that he had heard that Allied Arts released a plan that is somewhat surprising to people and he asked if Ms. Wilson could discuss that. Ms. Wilson replied that she was unable to stay for their presentation but heard later that they were pushing the City farther.

- Update on Adult Cabaret and Ethics

Chair Sheehy stated that the subcommittee is working on the adult cabaret legislation and they currently reviewing a rough draft. He added that it will be a few more weeks before it is ready.

Chair Sheehy then noted that the Mayor's office has completed its work with the advisory committee they convened and are moving forward with proposed legislation to address the advisory commission ethics problem with the current Municipal Code. He mentioned that the advisory group is made up of three advisory commissions who have raised issues about the new rules, plus representatives of 'good

government' groups, the Ethics Commission, and the City Attorney's office, Council Central staff, and the Office of Intergovernmental Relations.

Chair Sheehy feels that the legislation is as good as it is going to get and that it will be moving from the Mayor's office to City Council soon. Ms. Wilson added that the legislation, though not perfect, is workable and balanced. Chair Sheehy reminded everyone that the moratorium ends August 2.

- **ACTION ITEMS: Planning Commission Review & Actions**

- **SPC Consensus Points on Viaduct Op-Ed; Discussion & Possible Approval**

Chair Sheehy gave some background on this Op-Ed. He noted that Commissioner Fiori has crafted talking points on the Viaduct replacement project. Chair Sheehy hoped to achieve consensus on the general view that would be expressed in the op-ed and give some direction to the Executive Committee and Commissioner Fiori to move forward in working the Design Commission on the piece.

Chair Sheehy noted his concern about the timing. He expressed his opinion that the Planning Commission should not weigh in on a matter that is a ballot measure. He noted that it sounds like we will have until September before this issue potentially becomes a ballot measure but there is no time to lose.

Commissioner Fiori gave a recap of what he has done so far and went through the key points.

Commissioner Hilda Blanco noted that there will, no doubt, be cost overruns on the tunnel option. She feels that the problem lies in that it is about financial commitment and the fact that it will be taking up City financial resources.

Commissioner Eanes stated that, from a strategy point of view, using the word "myths" implies that the others are wrong and that could be too confrontational of a tone for an op-ed piece. He added that he would like to see them stated in a much shorter fashion. Commissioner Eanes agreed with the idea of moving this forward as it quickly since it lays out many things that are in the press right now. He added that the point about the cost is a tough issue. Commissioner Eanes noted that cost overruns are not a concern only for the tunnel option but for all of the options on any big transportation project.

Commissioner Clements stated that for 7 years we will have to learn to live without the viaduct and some of those businesses will be on life support or not survive. He continued that 20 years from now a 4 lane street along the waterfront will be congested whether or not there is a tunnel and we will still have a vibrant economy. Commissioner Clements feels that the money that we would essentially be giving back to the State would likely be spent on expanding 405 or something else he'd rather see the money spent here on the tunnel rather than spending it elsewhere.

Commissioner Blanco stated that she feels 520 is more important for the City and the money should go there. She feels that giving money back for regional transit projects is not a good idea. She continued that we have not figured out how to prioritize our transportation needs. Commissioner Blanco indicated that she feels that with saying yes or no to this project we will still not be able to address the overall transportation problem.

Commissioner Blomberg wondered if it is useful to point out in the talking points that there are more than just benefits to Seattle. He added that people should read our op-ed and be stunned by the points we make.

Commissioner Fiori stated that he has two points regarding the regional aspect of the project. He noted that much of the growth in King County is projected within Seattle. He added that the more we congest downtown the more growth may end up going somewhere else, resulting in more sprawl and less open space. Commissioner Fiori mentioned that development on the Eastside has already saturated the I-90 corridor so it is now moving to downtown Bellevue. He noted that the other point is the closure issue and it seems like a no brainer to keep the capacity as it is. Commissioner Fiori added that he can't see a transit solution. He added that what he can't seem to get around is what we do for 7 years while they are building the tunnel.

Commissioner Eanes stated that the closure times for each option are all over the place. He added that he is not sure what the difference is between 5 and 7 years in terms of impact on the city. Commissioner Eanes continued that it seems as though the impacts would be multiplied by the length of the closure.

Chair Sheehy asked if there was support to continue to work on this piece, in conjunction with the Design Commission, which would generally support the tunnel option.

Commissioner Eanes noted that another thing that we need to think about is whether the support is unqualified and whether there are things that need to be thought about more. He added that he feels the "no build" option would be terrible for the waterfront.

Chair Sheehy tabled the discussion until 5:20 pm, after the 520 briefing. Chair Sheehy asked whether Commissioners could stay until 5:40 to finish up items on the agenda and there was consensus to do so.

▪ **Discussion – Councilmember Jan Drago, Transportation Committee Chair**

Chair Sheehy welcomed City Councilmember Jan Drago and asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves.

Chair Sheehy noted that the Planning Commission is charged with advising the city on land use and transportation issues and that Councilmember Drago has recently taken over as the chair of the Council Transportation committee. He asked her to share her priorities for the committee. Councilmember Drago stated that there are lots of transportation issues and she would start with the one that is the furthest along in regard to implementation - the South Lake Union trolley which will break ground on July 7th at noon. It should be up and running by October 2007. Councilmember Drago noted that there is about a \$3 million funding gap and both Washington State's Federal Senators have that on their radar screen. She indicated that she feels that they will get the needed funding.

Councilmember Drago brought up the two-way Mercer project. She mentioned that a proviso was lifted that allows that project to go forward to the design phase. Councilmember Drago added that the project is in the EIS process right now. She noted that they cannot get any more grant money until design is completed and that it looks as though it will be 2007 for design and then funding. Councilmember Drago continued that the Mayor also has some money for the Mercer corridor. She

expressed that this might be a project for the Commission to look at. She added that the project would be completed before the Viaduct closes.

Councilmember Drago then brought up the timing on the Viaduct. She noted that they would like to relocate the utilities in 2008 with construction starting in 2009. She added that construction would last several years, possibly until about 2016. Councilmember Drago expressed that this is going to be disruptive no matter what decision is made. She mentioned that the Committee of the Whole has had several presentations on the different alternatives and the next two meetings will include presentations on the utilities plan. Councilmember Drago stated that the Council did allocate \$15,000 to look at the surface solution and they will have a presentation on that as well. She noted that SDOT is taking another look at the retrofit option. She also mentioned that Councilmember Steinbrueck asked that they have a presentation on the bypass tunnel alternative. She explained that this is 4 side by side lanes instead of the 6 lanes (3 each way – stacked) that the current tunnel proposal calls for. Councilmember Drago reminded the Commissioners that the State Legislature gave the responsibility to the City Council to advise them on the preferred alternative. She noted that, although everyone assumed they would go to the ballot with this, they were given a choice and they could vote on it by ordinance. She expressed that nothing would be done until after an expert review panel reports to the Governor expected on September 1.

Councilmember Drago reported that another project they are in the middle of is SR 520. She pointed out that she is newly involved in this project. She mentioned that the project team convened a citizen's group made up of one representative from each of the impacted and adjacent areas on the Seattle side of the bridge. On the City's side the representatives are Councilmember Richard Conlin, Councilmember Jan Drago and Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis. Councilmember Drago noted that the goal is to come forward with a City preferred alternative by the end of June. She stated that there is another group, with herself, Councilmember Conlin, Grace Crunican, Deputy Mayor Ceis, members from the Eastside and WSDOT, which will also make decisions on the preferred alternative. Their opinions will then go to Doug McDonald and, ultimately the Governor. She added that this will all play out this fall.

Councilmember Drago stated that the Legislature was very clear that the City Council look at two alternatives on the Viaduct, the tunnel option and the elevated option, and there is funding attached. She added that, in regard to 520, there are still several alternatives on the table and there is a lot of work to be done there.

Councilmember Drago reported that the Council very interested in having a modern streetcar system in the City. She noted that one is starting to come together piece by piece with the assumption that the Alaskan Way streetcar will be operational after the Viaduct. She added that Sound Transit indicated they were looking at a streetcar to service First Hill now that that neighborhood will not have a light rail station. She reiterated that it is a high priority for the Council to have an integrated streetcar system.

Councilmember Drago noted that King County Executive Ron Sims' ballot measure includes three bus rapid transit corridors for the City of Seattle. They would be Ballard to Downtown, West Seattle to Downtown and along Aurora. She added that the City would have to put matching money into that.

Commissioner Eanes expressed his interest in the by-pass tunnel option and that it was discussed by the Commission two years ago. He indicated that he thought the State was requiring 6 lanes or nothing and the by-pass would be less and this could be a problem. He added that during closure some traffic adjustments may become permanent. He continued that the State may back off of the 6 lane

requirement with the idea that the 4 lanes serve a more regional function and the two being dropped are more local.

Commissioner Eanes asked if the report on the “no build” option would include a transportation model that shows where all the traffic would go. Councilmember Drago replied that it would not since that information would take too much time to gather.

Councilmember Drago added that her preference is to have two dedicated lanes of transit on Alaskan Way and right now there are only four lanes on the surface. She believes that 3rd Ave will become a transit street once the tunnel is completed. Councilmember Drago expressed her hope that they would bring bus rapid transit down Alaskan Way as well but she is not sure that will happen.

Commissioner Clements noted that Councilmember Drago mentioned land use and transportation coordination. He noted that one recent example of this is the Dravus rezone question that has been proposed by the neighborhood and he thinks the City should be more aggressive in situations such as this. Commissioner Clements continued that if we are talking about spending so much money on these transportation initiatives we should leverage it with good land use decisions and choices to maximize our investment. He also pointed out that it is more than just a city of nodes, that transit is along corridors and there is an opportunity to leverage that as well.

Commissioner Eanes noted that we seem to be plagued as a City by disconnected transit planning. He added that this is frustrating at times and if there is anything she can do to mitigate this it would be appreciated. Councilmember Drago stated that with every decision they need to look at integration.

Commissioner Blomberg asked what sorts of matters does the Councilmember see as important as the Planning Commission reviews the 520 project. Councilmember Drago responded that she sees huge footprints. She added that when she looks at 90, Mercer Island, and some of the lidding she thinks that could be part of a solution to the huge impacts some transportation systems have on the city. Councilmember Drago continued that it seems to be preferable to have the bulk of the project over water instead of land. Commissioner Blomberg expressed that hopefully we could apply lessons learned elsewhere to this project.

Chair Sheehy noted that, when the DEIS is released on the 520 in August, the Commission will conduct a review. He added that if she or the Transportation Committee has any specific things that they want the Commission to look at, the Commission would welcome that input.

Commissioner Tony To pointed out that Councilmember Drago seemed very clear about the Governor making the call on the 520 and he wondered what the difference was between the State and City on the Viaduct and 520. Councilmember Drago replied that there was no difference and that the Governor would make both decisions.

Commissioner Fiori expressed his concern about the big holes in ground in between 2nd and James on down to Pioneer Square and what was going to happen there in terms of development. He added that there are more homeless people in the area as well as new development. Commissioner Fiori is curious to know how all these moving pieces fit together and what the current thought is on the Council. Councilmember Drago stated that the Council remains committed to the Civic Center Master plan and it is only because of the tunnel zone that they have gone forward with that and the RFC. She added that the project is a bit more flexible than it was originally as they have opened discussion about height and uses on the site.

Commissioner Fiori asked about the coordination of open spaces. Councilmember Drago replied that she had seen the article in the paper today about City Hall Park and she expressed that she does not know if what they are proposing makes much difference. She added that she is optimistic that the day center in the Morrison will make a difference.

Commissioner Clements asked whether there was anything the Planning Commission could be doing to assist Councilmember Drago. Ms. Wilson indicated that Councilmember Drago should keep the Planning Commission in mind as a resource for her committee. Councilmember Drago pointed out that if the Commission has any ideas they could contact her and we could build on that.

Chair Sheehy thanked Councilmember Drago for coming.

▪ **Briefing – 520 Bridge Project**

Daniel Babuca, Washington State Department of Transportation

Lindsay Yamane, Washington State Department of Transportation

Daniel Babuca gave a power point presentation and presented boards that depicted the alternatives. These boards and power point presentation are attached.

Commissioner To asked if the HOV lanes would be required to pay tolls. Mr. Babuca stated that the bridge will be tolled and the HOV lanes will possibly be tolled as well, but there will be a larger discussion held soon which may change those assumptions.

Commissioner Clements asked how the costs are evaluated, in particular the sub-alternatives. Mr. Babuca responded that the project goes through an annual cost update and each sub-alternative is costed out.

Chair Sheehy asked when the DEIS will be available. Mr. Babuca answered that it is now scheduled for mid-August.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jonathan Dubman from BetterBridge.org stated that the 520 project is just as important as the Viaduct and that this is a vital transportation corridor. He pointed out that something is going to get built and with each alternative is larger than what is there now. He continued that his group supports the Pacific interchange option. Mr. Dubman noted the benefits of this option - transit connecting 520 buses directly to the light rail, traffic flow improvements, and land use difference at the local level are quite profound.

Chris Leman from the Eastlake Community Council pointed out that the Boards and Commissions Room is wired for live television on Channel 21 broadcast or live web cast. He added that the listen line was not turned on for this meeting.

Mr. Leman commented that in regard to 520 he was intrigued by the discussion of the Design Advisory Group and that there are some members of that group who are extremely uncomfortable with the limited scope that it has taken.

Mr. Leman noted that the Design Commission has endorsed the connection between the pedestrian and bicycle path directly from the bridge to Madison Park. He added that it is being studied right now in the EIS and he urges the Planning Commission to endorse this connection.

Mr. Leman made a pitch for a serious supportive study for the 4 lane alternatives. He added that a modern 4 lane road will accommodate more traffic than the current 4 lane road because of the increased lane width and shoulders. He continued that the 4 lanes are probably all we can afford and all our urban system can withstand. Mr. Leman shared his concern that the 4 lane option has not been getting the attention within the City that it deserves.

Chair Sheehy thanked the members of the public for their comments.

Chair Sheehy then pointed out that there is no longer a quorum at the meeting so there can be no action taken on the Viaduct talking points at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 5:47 pm.