



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
October 28, 2004
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

George Blomberg, Chair; Steve Sheehy, Vice Chair; Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Lyn Krizanich, John Owen, Mimi Sheridan.

Commissioners Absent

Anjali Bhagat, Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Joe Quintana, Tony To, Paul Tomita.

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson, Acting Director

Elizabeth Martin, Analyst

Guests

Bob Morgan, Central Staff; Tom Hauger, DPD; Susan McLain, DPD.

Call to Order

Chair Blomberg called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Owen moved and Commissioner Eanes seconded to approve the October 14, 2004 Commission minutes. Commissioner Sheridan noted that she recused herself on the Action on the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The motion to approve the minutes with this revision was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report

- **Upcoming and Recent Activities**

Chair Blomberg referred Commissioners to the back of the agenda for a number of upcoming meetings and events noting in particular the upcoming City Center event on November 15th. Both the 11/11 and 11/25 Full Planning Commission meetings fall on holidays (Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving) so the next meeting will be rescheduled to **Thursday, 11/18 from 3:00 – 5:30 pm and will be held in City Hall, Room 370.**

Commissioners also mentioned the need to schedule the upcoming holiday potluck and suggested December 9th as a possible date. John Owen offered the use of his home on Capitol Hill again as a possible location. Commission staff will follow up

Chair Blomberg noted the vacancy of the Executive Director position for the Planning Commission. He then invited Acting Executive Director Barbara Wilson to speak to the Commission about her interest in the position. Ms. Wilson described the various options available to the Commission and expressed her own interest in formally applying for the Executive Director position. She articulated her interest in the Commission, her commitment and experience gained as Acting Director.

Chair Blomberg in conjunction with Vice-Chair Steve Sheehy agreed that it would be appropriate to discuss the vacancy in Executive Session.

- **Executive Session**

The Commission then met in Executive Session to discuss the vacancy of the Executive Director position.

- **Upcoming Schedule**

Elizabeth Martin, Planning Analyst mentioned the following schedule items: the Transportation Committee needs to reschedule a meeting in November and meets on 12/16 in December; the Executive Committee will meet three times in November (11/2, 11/16, 11/30) and once in December (12/14); the Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee will meet on 11/9 and on 12/7 instead of 12/14 (schedules permitting).

- **Administrative Assistant Position**

Ms. Wilson mentioned that staff will be interviewing today for the Planning Commission Administrative Assistant position. She hopes to hire someone by the end of the week.

- **2005 New Commissioner Recruitment**

Commissioners Paul Tomita and Jeanne Krikawa will be leaving at the end of the year. Commissioner Angela Brooks had to resign effective this Tuesday as she has accepted a new position with the City of Seattle. Chair Blomberg reminded the Commission that recruitment for new members is underway. Applications are due November 25. Chair Blomberg encouraged other Commissioners to consider possible candidates and to share

those suggestions with Commissioners and staff. Ms. Wilson recommended keeping in mind diversity on the Commission. It was suggested that the list of former Commissioners might be a good place to look for recommendations and/or the possibility of reinstating a former Commissioner. Another possibility would be to look into the graduates of the Get Engaged Program to see if there are potential candidates there.

ACTION: Staff will circulate the list of former Planning Commissioners to the Commission to generate leads on new Planning Commissioner candidates.

COMMISSION PROJECT REVIEW:

ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT

Ms. Wilson mentioned that the Commission draft response to the City Council's guiding principles, draft safety and transition plan, and preferred alternative will be delivered to City Council in the next week. She noted there is a copy of the draft letter in Commission folders. Commissioner Eanes asked about the relationship between the waterfront planning and the Alaskan Way Viaduct. He posed the question of whether the Commission wants to weigh in on the waterfront process here or stay focused on the guiding principles. Chair Blomberg responded that the guiding principles make reference to the waterfront planning process. Commissioner Owen stressed that it is important to continue to reinforce that the Alaskan Way Viaduct project is not just a transportation project but that it is an economic development project.

ACTION: Pending inclusion of the proposed revisions, the Commission approved the Alaskan Way Viaduct / Seawall Project response letter to Council. Final comments will be taken until close of business on Friday. Chair Blomberg will work with SPC staff on final approval and submit to Council. Commissioner Sheridan recused from Action on this project.

CENTER CITY

Commissioner Owen suggested that the Commission send a quick follow up letter to Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis offering to meet briefly with the Deputy Mayor to discuss what the next steps might be for the Commission regarding the Center City Strategy. Commissioner Owen also recommended that some outreach from the Commission to Bellevue, Everett and Tacoma and the regional community would be helpful. A discussion on this topic with Planning Director John Rahaim would be useful to get a briefing of what the Planning

Division is intending and how the Commission can participate. Commissioner Owen stated that there are questions regarding the timing of this effort as well as its focus, particularly in light of recent discussion of the Broadway area. Ms. Wilson mentioned that Mr. Rahaim may sit in on the Friday meeting sessions to assist the Commission in prioritizing its work plan for 2005. Commissioner Owen will contact the Center City working group to schedule this meeting

ACTION: Planning Commission staff will draft a half-page letter to Deputy Mayor Ceis offering a follow meeting on Center City next steps. SPC staff will work with the Commission to schedule the next Friday work sessions and will request a briefing from Mr. Rahaim and inquire about how Broadway fits into Center City. This will be added to the next Executive Committee agenda per Vice Chair Sheehy's request.

10-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Chair Blomberg noted that there have been two sessions with Commissioners and Councilmembers to discuss the 10-Year Comprehensive Plan Update. Commissioners Finrow and To and Acting Director Wilson met with Councilmember Steinbrueck. Commissioners Eanes, Sheridan, Owen and Ms. Wilson met with Councilmember Conlin. There will be a meeting with Councilmember Rasmussen, the third member of the Urban Development and Planning Committee on November 16, and Commissioners Eanes, Sheridan and To will attend with Ms. Wilson. Ms. Wilson directed Commissioners to the black notebooks which contain background materials on the Comprehensive Plan Update. In particular, the Director's Report may be helpful to review as well as the summary of the Council UDP committee recommendations.

The meeting with Councilmember Steinbrueck generated the issues of reviewing updates, monitoring, targets, and the housing-to-jobs ratio. Commissioner Finrow reported that Councilmember Steinbrueck requested that the Commission participate in the full Council meeting to share its views on the Update. Ms. Wilson noted the Council's revised schedule; the UDP committee will have its final meeting on this topic on 12/8 and the Full Council vote will take place on 12/13. According to Bob Morgan, Central Staff, Council has been accepting public comment.

Commissioner Finrow stated that over the next two years there will be a special committee of Council and the Commission to discuss urban indicators in a more detailed way. A discussion of measurable standards requires more careful thought and planning.

Ms. Wilson reported that the jobs-to-housing targets and the re-distribution of numbers came up in these meetings. The target numbers in South Lake Union have decreased and Councilmember Steinbrueck has asked if these revised targets are now low enough. At the meeting with Councilmember Conlin Commissioners questioned how these numbers were redistributed noting significant increases the number of job targets outside of urban centers

and those targets increased in the Duwamish. Commissioner Owen asked about the change in terminology from estimates to targets.

Tom Hauger, DPD, responded his understanding is that the Council is interested in being more assertive and indicating some measure of accountability and that this is reflected in the decision to use 'targets' instead of 'estimates'. However, there is no language in the policies that indicates an obligation to ensure that these targets are met, instead 'targets' function as 'planning goals'. Commissioner Owen reiterated that it is important to know what these terms mean before the Commission tinkers with the numbers. Bob Morgan, Council Central staff, responded that there can be a city planning action if the targets are off track. It is not a mandate. Commissioner Owen noted that this is not fiscally neutral. He noted, for example the University District, is worse off than downtown when it comes to open space and infrastructure and that the City will invest resources into those communities with increased target numbers. Commissioner Sheridan noted that it would be helpful to have more background on the basis for these target numbers. She commented that the flip side is that the City investment resources to help a neighborhood. She asked though, what if a neighborhood like Wallingford exceeds its growth targets. She stated that the City has a limited ability to tell a developer not to build and yet that is what the residents of Wallingford want.

Chair Blomberg inquired if the numbers shifts in the Plan respond in an appropriate way. He wondered what the consequences are of shifting numbers. Commissioner Eanes pointed out that in South Lake Union, for instance, the high target numbers could be used by a developer to support a re-zone request. He also noted that in the past these numbers were in agreement with the neighborhood plans and wondered if this is still the case. Mr. Morgan stated that the numbers in South Lake Union were originally thought to be too high and that the new numbers are seen as being more balanced. He noted that as far as the University District, and University of Washington Master Plan, we are not getting the development of housing that the City desires and it is a priority. He also stated that the increased housing numbers are needed to meet the existing increase in job numbers in the University District. He commented that the 25% of growth outside of the urban centers was primarily based on that fact that in the last 10 years, there has been a 28% of growth outside of urban centers. Mr. Morgan stated the policy now is still to have less growth outside of the urban centers. Commissioner Finrow stated that there is a discussion about quantifiable measures in lots of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan. This has political and financial ramifications. Commissioner Clements observed that planning is supposed to be concurrent with this and yet it is not.

Ms. Wilson encouraged Commissioners to take home the notebooks with background Comprehensive Plan materials and to look through the enclosed worksheet in detail noting the aim is to get the response letter to Council the day before Thanksgiving. She noted that as far as overall elements; the update reconfirms the City's commitment to the Urban Village Strategy and good urban planning. The Reader's Guide is a good development, and Mr. Hauger has worked with a professional graphic design consultant to produce the guide.

Mr. Finrow requested that at the next Full Planning Commission meeting there will be a copy of the guide for Commissioners to review. Commissioner Owen complimented Mr. Hauger on the efforts he has made.

Chair Blomberg mentioned other issues such as the view protection issue and alley vacation, and the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) and how it fits with the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Owen requested a copy of the TSP for each Commissioner. Another issue listed on the worksheet is budget-related. Ms. Wilson mentioned that at the meeting with Councilmember Steinbrueck, the issue of monitoring and DPD's demographer staff position was discussed. This position has been cut in the new budget. Council has some questions about this. The Planning Commission believes that this monitoring program is important. Councilmember Steinbrueck noted that Planning Commission support would be very useful. Mr. Morgan stated that Council will be voting on budget issues next week and that there is a proposal to put the demographer position back in the budget. He also noted that the Comp Plan amendments actually expand the monitoring aspects.

Ms. Wilson summarized the outstanding issues for the SPC response to include: monitoring indicators, the neighborhood plan element, the single-family zoning language in the Northgate neighborhood plan in which Councilmember Conlin removed locational criteria. Ms. Wilson asked if the Planning Commission would like to weigh in on this. Mr. Hauger noted that the Northgate Stakeholders voted 6 – 4 to keep the original single-family zoning language that was in the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. The language proposed by CM Conlin reflects this. Commissioner Eanes asked if it is possible that this issue might be re-visited next year. Mr. Hauger pointed out that it is unlikely that the Council will look at this again in 2005. Commissioner Sheridan wondered if Northgate is getting enough development in multi-family zones stating that spread multifamily out more may not be a big deal if we are not getting the growth we need in places where it is already zoned.

Ms. Wilson noted that a few other that have come up include Councilmember Conlin concern about Creeks policy, alley vacations, historic resources, and the environmental indicators.

Ms Wilson reminded the SPC that the final letter on the Comp Plan Update will be approved at the 11/18/04 Full Commission meeting. At the committee-level and via email there can be a variety of discussions prior to that meeting. At the next Executive Committee the SPC will start a draft, then the HNUC committee will tackle some of the big land use issues. Commissioner Owen requested that the Commission assign a chart of tasks and add an ad hoc committee will be formed to discuss the TSP stating that the Commission needs to frame the relationship of the TSP to the Comp Plan.

ACTION: The Commission will submit a letter stating the importance of monitoring to Council. The Commission supports retaining resources for monitoring as well as other planning functions within DPD. The Comp Plan amendments expand future monitoring.

The Commission will draft a response letter on the Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan Update and submit it to Council prior to Thanksgiving. The Commission will also participate in a Council meeting to brief Councilmembers on the Update.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

Susan McLain, DPD staff, briefed the Commission on the Home Ownership Summit follow up work. She noted that in June the Mayor sponsored a Home Ownership Summit. Commissioners Brooks and To attended.

Among the action items for that summit were finance issues and the recommendation to develop an Advisory Group on development issues. Ms. McLain stated that the Office of Housing will set up an advisory group to generate recommendations to the Mayor, Council, City departments and the development community. The group will focus in three geographic areas: the Central District, Rainier Valley and Delridge/Westwood Village. She noted that the group will review development issues, increasing owner-occupied housing with the City of Seattle, and addressing the needs of working and minority families.

Starting in early 2005, the group will meet monthly and generate recommendations by mid-2005. Members will include, developers, neighborhood residents from each of the three target neighborhoods, architects, planners, low-income housing developers, real estate professionals, Planning Commissioners, land use attorneys, and economic development representatives.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the lifespan of the group. Ms. McLain replied that the group is only temporary though it could recommend a longer-term follow-up. She stated likely the group will make final recommendations in mid 2005.

Commissioner Finrow asked if there is a target zone for home ownership throughout the city and what the appropriate level of home ownership is. He wondered if there are there existing goals He cited the concern of growing numbers of home owners declaring bankruptcy as they can not afford the houses they have purchased. Commissioner Eanes echoed this concern. He mentioned that HUD has pushed home ownership for the last two decades and that the Feds have viewed it as a panacea to solve all problems when for some segments of the population it can be a disaster. For working families who earn 60% - 80% of the median income their needs are not met and it does not solve the housing crisis.

Commissioner Sheridan urged the Advisory Group to push for DADUs. Commissioner Clements suggested including transportation options to screen where additional housing is located so that housing investments and transportation investments are coordinated throughout the city. He encouraged a multiple evaluation process, not solely where cheap land is located. Chair Blomberg and the Commission offered to participate on this advisory group. A Commissioner from the Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee will attend sessions.

ACTION: The Commission agreed to participate on the Homeownership Advisory Group and will appoint Commissioners Eanes and To to represent the Commission on this group.

Public Comment

No public comments were made

Adjournment

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 9:20 a.m.