



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, July 09, 2020
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Rian Watt, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Kelly Rider, Sandra Fried

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Patience Malaba, Katherine Idziorek

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 3:09 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth.

Chair Austin asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

ACTION: Commissioner Patti Wilma moved to approve the 6/25 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

Update: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)

Nathan Torgelson, Director, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Director Torgelson acknowledged that significant events have happened since his last update to the Planning Commission, noting that 73% of the SDCI staff are now working from home in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and that the Black Lives Matter protests had initiated serious race and social justice discussions within the Department, across the city, nation and world. Proceeding with the update of the Department's work, Director Torgelson noted that the SDCI budget is 91% funded by fees, so although building development intake volume is down about 15% lower than its levels at this time last year, intake valuation is up 25%. As such, SDCI has had limited impacts to their budget. At this time, many projects are rushing to be vested, in anticipation of changes to technical codes. Those codes will be adopted by the State, likely in February 2021, and Seattle's changes so far will follow the same effective date assuming adoption by Council. SDCI now has \$2.2B in valuation accepted for intake through June, with another \$2.5B scheduled for the rest of the year.

Right now, building development issuance is still trailing 2019's levels for both volume and valuation, and is now 16% below 2019's Jan-June volume and 42.2% lower for Jan-June issuance valuation. Land Use intake is trailing last year's Jan-June volumes by 19% and is now on pace for roughly 720 applications accepted for intake for 2020- lower than what we have seen over the past couple of years but still much higher than what we experienced during the last recession. MUP issuance is actually tracking closer to 2019 level and is down 8.4% from last year's Jan-June volume. Trade issuance volumes overall are trailing last year's Jan-June level by 17.4%, though most permit types have shown a considerable rebound from their March/April lows. SDCI inspectors are still working in the field, with inspections being done with new safety protocols in place, doing virtual inspections where possible.

In response to the Seattle City Council's emergency legislation allowing administrative design review meetings but a strong mandate to transition quickly to virtual meetings with the Design Review Boards, SDCI has been working to develop an online format, likely using Webex to start those meetings in the beginning of August. SDCI is also helping Council with new flood plain regulations that were required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as assisting Councilmember Strauss with new legislation to allow more flexible regulations for childcare facilities. Additional work is being done at SDCI to support the City's 2013 Climate Action Plan goals of reducing building and transportation emissions by 64% by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2050. To that end, there are proposed technical code changes, as discussed earlier, to prohibit the use of natural gas for space heating in most buildings and for water heating in new and substantially altered hotels and taller multi-family buildings. SDCI has also sent their omnibus ordinance to City Council to make small code amendments, including changes to bike parking requirements for affordable housing projects.. SDCI is

now finishing an effort to pre-approve the designs for ten Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADU's), hoping to have that completed in July/August

Director Torgelson then shared a list of major projects and outreach that SDCI is working on:
Projects

- Seattle Center Arena
- Northgate's NHL practice facility under construction, as well as over 1,000 units of housing on the Northgate Mall site
- Sound Transit 3 permitting and code amendments

Outreach

- In January and February SDCI held Home fairs

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked about the number of affordable housing projects that have applied for permits in 2020, and Director Torgelson said he would get those numbers and follow-up.
- Commissioners asked whether the project at Northgate was subject to Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements, and Director Torgelson confirmed that it was not subject to MHA but that Simon properties was planning to participate in the Multifamily Tax Exemption Program.
- Commissioners asked if the DADU pre-approved plan release would include offering technical assistance to property owners. Director Torgelson said that the usual resources available for questions about development would be available from SDCI.
- Commissioners suggested that the Home Fairs could be held online next year.
- Commissioners asked if the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) from the Office of Housing (OH) would be coordinated with SDCI to expedite any of the affordable housing projects that get funded by OH. Director Torgelson shared that all affordable housing projects would be expedited.
- Commissioners mentioned hearing from developers working on modular housing that they were having trouble getting through SDCI's permitting process. Director Torgelson shared that he was aware of the challenges to permitting modular buildings, and that SDCI is working on those issues as we become more familiar with this building product type. SDCI is supportive of new building technology.

Discussion: Omnibus Legislation Public Testimony

Commissioner Goldberg provided an overview of the public testimony drafted after discussions in the Planning Commission's Land Use and Transportation Committee about the omnibus legislation. The main point of the testimony being the Commission's concern with the legislation's elimination of bike parking requirements for some buildings, arguing that a decision of that significance should have a more robust engagement and discussion process with stakeholders.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked why this change to bike parking was being proposed now, inquiring as to what precipitated it being added to this omnibus legislation. A staff member of SDCI who was in

attendance, Gordon Clowers, shared that the Seattle Office of Housing and the Housing Development Consortium had both advocated for making these changes.

- Commissioners observed that the issue has many factors and nuances, raising the point that the omnibus could potentially do more to address those nuances.
- Commissioners discussed the similarity between arguments against bike parking and past arguments against small efficiency dwelling units, suggesting that these kinds of concerns can be addressed by thorough criteria that are applied to both market rate and affordable housing developments.
- Commissioners noted how difficult the trade off is between bike parking and additional affordable housing units, especially given the challenge of predicting how much the bike parking will be used.

Briefing: Public Space Equity Analysis

Cayce James, Office of Planning and Community Development

Mx. James provided the Commission with an overview of the purpose and work of the Outside Citywide program, noting recent work of the program, including:

- An assessment of current public space conditions that accounts for the different characteristics of open spaces in addition to their size and location
- A mapping tool to assist in public space planning
- Findings that better connections between public spaces can at times be more effective at expanding access than developing new spaces
- Recent work in South Park to further the development of a Riverwalk that focuses on equitable engagement, and empowering youth to participate in vision efforts

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed interest in understanding how the Outside Citywide Equity Mapping Tool leads to more equitable investments, including by the Seattle Department of Transportation. Mx. James shared that many departments have started using the tool to help prioritize investments, and for use by advocates.
- Commissioners suggested that additional data on the quality of public spaces could potentially be crowd sourced, and supplied via the City's Find It Fix It app, and that data walks could also help get community to weigh on how they'd like to use spaces.

Public Comment

No public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.