



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 14, 2020
Online Meeting
Approved Meeting Minutes

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

Commissioners Absent: Kelly Rider

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

Guests: Katherine Idziorek, Patience Malaba

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 3:00 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 provided a preview of the agenda. He announced that the next meeting will be held on May 28. This meeting will also be held online.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the April 23, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Grace Kim seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director Vanessa Murdock stated that this is the Planning Commission's third online meeting. She reviewed the format of the meeting and noted that in-person public comment cannot be accommodated at this time, rather public comment may be submitted in advance of the meeting and will be read aloud during the public comment portion of the agenda. This meeting format is in accordance with rules laid out by the Attorney General in terms of Open Public Meetings Act compliance in this time of the COVID-19 crisis. Ms. Murdock welcomed Katherine Idziorek and Patience Malaba whom are anticipated to soon be approved for appointment by the City Council. They both applied to serve on the Commission last year. This year's process to fill current and upcoming vacancies is anticipated to start again soon.

Public Comment: 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Recommendations

Executive Director Murdock read the following public comment letter:

Last year I proposed an amendment to include trucks and TNCs as mode shares in the Transportation Element of the Comp Plan. These vehicle categories are the fastest growing in Seattle and in major cities across the country and world. This January the World Economic Forum (WEF) predicted demand for e-commerce deliveries would cause a 36% increase in the number of city center delivery vehicles in the next 10 years. These vehicles will produce 6 million new tons of CO2 emissions and a 21% increase in commute times. That was before COVID-19 made e-commerce the world's lifeline to groceries, meals and household supplies. Last year SPC appreciated the proposal to start counting delivery vehicles but recommended it be part of the Comp Plan's Major Update for 2020. We know these uncounted sources of congestion and pollution are continuing to grow. My question is, if the proposal to count them is not among the proposed Updates, what is its status and what is OPCD's position on this important issue? Thanks for your consideration.

Megan Kruse

Action: 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Recommendations

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission (SPC) staff, provided an overview of the final draft letter on the Commission's 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendment recommendations. The Commission reviewed a staff draft letter at the April 23 meeting. The staff draft letter was revised based on Commissioner comments. The Planning Commission's recommendations will be submitted to the City Council's Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee.

No changes were made to the following recommendations included in the staff draft letter:

Docketed Amendment Proposals Recommended for Adoption

- FLUM Amendment: 4831 35th Ave SW
- Text Amendment: Delridge Neighborhood Plan goals and policies

Docketed Amendment Proposals Not Recommended for Adoption

- FLUM Amendment: 11316 and 11318 5th Ave NE

Mr. Hoey reviewed the proposed text changes to the following recommendations:

Docketed Amendments Not Analyzed by OPCD

- Alternative Name for Single Family Zones
- 130th Street Station Urban Village
- South Park Urban Village Designation

The Commissioners suggested minor revisions to the section on the 130th Street Station Urban Village. The final proposed language is as follows: “We understand the urgency for the development of the future 130th Street Station because it is on a light rail line that has not been built yet, but the irony of this reason only further amplifies the continued disinvestment in the communities of color around a future infill station at Graham Street. The Commission supports station area planning around this station building upon the established community vision and recommends Graham Street also be studied as an Urban Village.”

ACTION: Chair Austin requested a vote to approve the final 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Recommendations letters as revised. The letter was approved unanimously.

Briefing: Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan

Michael Hubner and Patrice Carroll, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Mr. Hubner provided an overview of the briefing, including the Comprehensive Plan update schedule changes, the regional context and current work, and implications of COVID-19 on this work. The current Comprehensive Plan, Seattle 2035, contains a growth strategy for land use based on urban centers and villages. The Plan’s goals and policies guide City plans, programs, and investments for a prosperous and equitable city. The major periodic update is a multi-department effort with robust community engagement over several years. The Major Update is scheduled to take place every 8 years and is intended to include changes in state law, lessons learned since the last update, and an updated 20-year growth forecast. Seattle’s Plan was last updated in 2015-16.

It usually takes approximately three years to update the Plan, including the environmental review process. The Plan was originally intended to be complete by June 2023, however the last state legislative session adopted a bill to change the deadline to June 2024. This change affected all jurisdictions in the tri-county Puget Sound region. The change was intended to align plans between the Puget Sound counties and match the 8-year cycle with the latest census data. This new 2024 deadline will help the City, as much has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. OPCD will now formulate a community engagement plan and research background reports in 2021. The beginning of the environmental review process will also move to 2021. The Major Update is a citywide effort. OPCD had begun the process of reaching out to other departments for coordination. Within OPCD, staff from different divisions were being assembled to capture a diversity of skill sets, racial, cultural, age, and other perspectives. There is now less of a clear vision for the staff team due to COVID-19 impacts.

The Puget Sound Regional Council will adopt its final Vision 2050 in Fall 2020. This plan will include an updated Regional Growth Strategy. King County will update its Countywide Planning Policies in 2021, including 20-year growth targets, housing, and jobs. The City of Seattle is involved in this effort. An updated urban growth capacity report will help answer how to plan for future growth. Seattle will work with the State Office of Financial Management as it works toward updated growth projections in 2022.

Mr. Hubner described some of the technical work being done now in preparation for the Major Update, including an analysis of housing needs and supply. The City received a grant to address housing capacity and how to address housing gaps. A consultant is performing the technical work including developing projections of housing need and types in five-year increments. A buildable lands analysis analyzes rates of growth, achieved densities, and development capacity using GIS tools and consultant support. He reviewed some potential policy themes for consideration in the Major Update, including race and equity, growth strategy, livability, housing, economic opportunity, and a resilient, carbon-neutral city. Some early policy drivers include the racial equity toolkit related to single-family zoning, anti-displacement work, housing affordability, and the Industrial Maritime Strategy.

OPCD is also considering new policy issues around how the Comprehensive Plan update can address COVID-19 recovery, resilience, and adaptation. These emerging issues include:

- Disproportionate impacts on communities of color rooted in historical inequities
- Impacts from economic downturn on housing, employment, businesses, institutions
- Uncertainty about growth and land use needs
- Uncertain future for mobility and transit (e.g., impact of telecommuting)
- Elevated importance of public health and impacts on services, public space, etc.

Mr. Hubner described the challenge as OPCD has stated it: "To plan for a new, different, more equitable, more sustainable and resilient future through this comprehensive plan update." He expressed interest in working with the Commission as this work evolves.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if the preliminary work for the Major Update builds on the equity analysis done by OPCD in 2016 for the last Major Update. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD is planning to update this work, but it will be pushed to 2021. This is separate from the racial equity analysis of single-family zoning, but both are all pieces of a larger puzzle.
- Commissioners noted that COVID-19 has created a new reality, including different use of our streets, parks, etc. Downtown feels like a ghost town. This pandemic highlights the opportunity to consider where people work and live. E-commerce is growing during the pandemic as deliveries have acted as a lifeline. New ways to manage curbsides and street spaces need to be considered.
- Commissioners suggested using caution in reaction to the COVID-19 recovery. For example, there is concern about the impact of going back to single offices and other aspects of pre-COVID life.
- Commissioners expressed appreciation for the emotional resiliency of frontline workers and commended OPCD for including industrial maritime and living wage jobs and alternatives to single-family zoning in the Major Update.

- Commissioners asked if there has been any discussion of a recovery plan vs. a long-term plan. There will need to be some big discussions around how to best allocate resources for issues like the West Seattle Bridge, the Magnolia Bridge, transit, and bike investments. Mr. Hubner stated that the Comprehensive Plan has a role in long-term recovery and the need for infrastructure improvements will be important to consider in the Plan.
- Commissioners suggested that many of the current challenges are also opportunities. Public use of the right-of-way is an example. Commissioners encouraged the City to be more aspirational. This pandemic has put increased emphasis on the inequity between single-family zoning and housing affordability. We should acknowledge that COVID-19 is not an argument for less density but equitable density.
- Commissioners encouraged OPCD to integrate public health into the planning process. The long-term ramifications of this crisis are not yet understood, but the public will experience profound health impacts.
- Commissioners urged OPCD to think proactively about community engagement strategies for the Major Update and how to conduct engagement differently in the future.
- Commissioners commented that they would like to see the Plan address education. It has become clear that education may be changing; schools may not return in the same way as pre-COVID-19.

Mr. Hubner stated that community engagement is a rich topic with both challenges and opportunities. He offered to return to the Commission as the work evolves. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Hubner and Ms. Carroll for their briefing.

Commissioner Perspectives: Public Health and Climate Change

Commissioners Sandra Fried and Jamie Stroble

Commissioner Sandra Fried provided a global health perspective on the current COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that research, health care providers, data, and funding are essential during this time. There are different layers that provide guidance at the city, county, state, and international levels, including both the public and private sector. The World Health Organization (WHO) provides the highest level of guidance. One hundred and ninety-four member states have elected to be part of the WHO. Member states receive guidance that they can agree to or not. The WHO is being highlighted now because they have a little bit more influence during a pandemic.

Examples of guidance from the WHO could include basic sanitation in the time of COVID-19, but countries can follow guidance of their own health agencies (e.g. the Centers for Disease Control in the U.S.). Some other countries don't have their own agencies, so the WHO helps countries to decide how to respond (for example, how to use medical tools). According to the latest WHO COVID-19 briefing, there are 4.1 million cases around the world. Testing is becoming more reliable. The disease itself is changing and morphing. There are significant mortality rates from COVID-19 itself but also from unmet health needs and broader social and economic implications of the pandemic induced shutdown. The worst repercussions affect the most marginalized populations. These include stress-related violence and domestic violence.

The world is leaning on the WHO for better diagnostic tools and vaccines. We are seeing increased speed and collaboration between drug companies and governments. The World Health Assembly is usually held during this time of May in Geneva. This year it will be a virtual meeting for 2 days. Only one resolution will be discussed. This resolution will determine how the world will equitably respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Distribution of a vaccine will need to be handled equitably. This will be incredibly challenging, as this issue presents a huge ethical problem. We need equitable inputs to this discussion among global governments. We need to innovative solutions to keep public sector alive.

In summary, Commissioner Fried shared the following principles, from her own personal perspective, that need to be followed during this crisis: 1) we need more funding for basic services; 2) we need better pathways for input; and 3) we need to ensure equitable access.

Commissioner Jamie Stroble provided her perspective on how climate change is impacting health and how COVID-19 is affecting that relationship. She stated that the U.S. is currently on track to have the hottest year on record, primarily as a result of fossil fuels. There are two separate climate change models – a consumption-based or a direct emissions model. Most jurisdictions are using the direct emissions model. The consumption model is more comprehensive, as it includes the impacts of production. Most climate plans have goals and targets around what individual agencies can control. In 2017, King County government operations represented ~1.7% of countywide scale emissions. Partner with other jurisdictions is needed. The King County-Cities Climate Collaboration currently includes King County, sixteen cities, and the Port of Seattle. Together these entities represent eighty percent of the more than two million residents of King County. The City of Seattle is part of this collaboration. Smaller cities do not have the resources to participate, as many are facing budget cuts. There is a need to support each other in collective action.

There are a wide variety of strategies needed to reduce emissions by eighty percent by the year 2050. Some of these are big challenges and are controlled by the Federal and State governments. The concept of “flattening the curve” during the COVID-19 crisis has resonated with people. Emissions similarly also need to be flattened. The anticipated impacts of climate change in King County impact public health as well. Impacts to human health include changes in disease vectors; the range of certain diseases is expanding. Severe weather events are becoming bigger and more intense. Climate change will also have impacts on migration, nutrition, heat-related illnesses, air quality - all impacts will be exacerbated.

Commissioner Stroble described the impacts of climate change on tribes and tribal health. There will be significant cultural loss to tribal and native communities including access to traditional lands and foods. Tribes are losing their homeland and their children will not have the same cultural connections. Stroble then shared a series of maps demonstrating the impacts of climate change on underrepresented communities and vulnerable populations. Decisions made in the past will amplify the impacts of climate change. A map of COVID-19 cases shows some of the same trends in areas experiencing exacerbating circumstances with fewer resources. People of color represent a higher number of cases per 100,000 than white populations.

The ability to mitigate climate change impacts will be affected by the economic impacts of this pandemic. King County Metro had a plan to transition to zero emission buses but their budget will be significantly reduced. Air quality impacts are anticipated to increase during fire/smoke season comes, and there may be a shortage of N-95 masks due to COVID-19.

Commissioner Stroble stated that we to make informed choices grounded in science and avoid significant impacts, especially to disproportionately impacted communities that rely on public service safety nets. A critical decision will be how to move forward, rather than going back to “normal”.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners commended the work of King County Public Health, especially the communications team. The range of public health infrastructure around the state is significant. A large number of dedicated people are working to respond to this public health crisis.
- Commissioners suggested sharing highlights of these presentations with OPCD for the Comprehensive Plan update and other planning work.
- Commissioners stated that the City will be assessing its budget and making tough decisions. Data-based and equitable criteria should be used when making budget cuts.
- Commissioners expressed concern that public transportation may be cut. This could have unexpected health consequences, as more people may be crowded into fewer transit vehicles.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.