



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Jerry Finrow, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION MAY 24, 2007 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Jerry Finrow – Chair, Linda Amato, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Marshall Foster, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Kirsten Pennington

Commissioners Absent

Mahlon Clements, Martin Kaplan, M. Michelle Mattox, Steve Sheehy, Tony To

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills, Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist

Guests

John Rahaim, DPD

In Attendance

Rebecca Herzfeld, Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff; Dave Gering, Manufacturing Industrial Council, Marilyn Young Skogland, Jonathan Kalley

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 7:32 am by Chair Jerry Finrow.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ Approve May 10, 2007 Minutes

Commissioner Colie Hough Beck stated that she had an addition to the minutes. She noted that during Barbara Wilson's discussion on Ethics, she noted that Commissioners should inform the Executive Director and Chair if they are having private meetings with project proponents. Commissioner Hough Beck requested that this statement be included in the minutes. Ms. Wilson replied that this would be included in the minutes.

ACTION: Commissioner Mark Johnson moved for the approval of the May 10, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Kay Knapton seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

▪ **Chairs Report**

Chair Finrow noted several upcoming Commissioner meetings. He stated that next Thursday, May 31 there would be the fourth and final Industrial Lands Strategy Workshop, held from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. in the Bertha Landes room. Chair Finrow noted that at this meeting the Commission will present our preliminary themes from what we heard from the stakeholder involvement process and some of our preliminary observations. He added that DPD staff will present some of its preliminary thinking about the Strategy and that Stakeholders will have an opportunity to respond to both presentations.

Chair Finrow mentioned that the next Executive Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 5 from, 7:30 – 9:00 am at SMT 4096. He noted that the Commission will plan the June Commission meetings, and follow up on the retreat and the final Industrial Lands workshop.

Chair Finrow noted that the next Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee Meeting, will be Tuesday, June 12, 7:30-9:00 a.m. He mentioned that the Commission will get a briefing and give feedback on the DADU Technical Guide. Chair Finrow added that the Commission will also finalize the Affordable Housing Action Agenda work plan and do more work developing the Agenda

Chair Finrow noted that the next Full Commission Meeting will be Thursday, June 14 from 3:00pm–5:30pm, in the Boards and Commissions room.

Chair Finrow noted that Commission staff is still working on organizing a tour of Seattle’s industrial lands that will be led by DPD and will include a look at Port operations. He noted that it should be either next week or the following week and that staff is very close to setting a date and they will notify the Commission of that date.

Chair Finrow stated that the City Neighborhood Council held a workshop on Saturday, May 19 to begin thinking about Neighborhood Plans. He noted that Councilmember Sally Clark gave opening remarks and that many of the Commissioners attended. Chair Finrow asked if any of those Commissioners who attended would like to comment.

Commissioner Linda Amato stated that she was on the panel that discussed neighborhood plans, including community benefit agreements, development of neighborhood plans, and keeping development compatible with neighborhood plans. She noted that participants broke into groups and discussed next steps for neighborhood plans and that this discussion was framed in the context of how to keep out unwanted development. Commissioner Amato noted that what she heard the most was that, while neighborhood plans were a good idea, they often had no teeth and that neighborhoods had to ignore zoning and the Comp Plan, focusing instead on sidewalks and parks. Commissioner Amato noted that this time around people said they wanted more control over zoning.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated she had attended and felt there was a lack of diversity there. She added that she hoped the process would become more inclusive.

Commissioner Kay Knapton stated that often times businesses were left out of the planning process, often because they didn't want to alienate customers and the neighborhood people did not do out reach to businesses. She noted that last time the city put a lot of funding to be given out to neighborhoods to complete the recommendations in their plans. She added that should happen again.

Chair Finrow stated that he attended the UDP committee meeting on May 23 to brief the committee on the Commission's recommendations on Councilmember Steinbrueck's proposed legislation regarding adult cabarets. He stated that it passed with one amendment forwarded by Councilmember Clark regarding restrictions in certain 1G1 and IG2 zones. He added that the legislation should go to Council on June 11.

Chair Finrow suggested that there be further discussion about neighborhood plans.

Ms. Wilson stated that she attended a workshop on neighborhood planning at the APA conference. She noted that neighborhood planning tends to involve primarily middle class white homeowners. Ms. Wilson stated that mandatory training on neighborhood planning had helped make the process better in other areas.

Commission Hough-Beck stated she felt communication and education are important pieces of the puzzle because without them many decisions are often made out of fear.

Commissioner Marshall Foster mentioned that he was primarily concerned about bringing enough resources to the neighborhood plans. He noted that, while working in San Francisco, they often had a budget of half a million dollars for one neighborhood. Commissioner Foster added that giving it adequate funding will help ensure that people do not feel like it has no teeth and is a waste of time.

Commission Mark Johnson said that, in Wallingford during the first neighborhood planning process, there had been animosity between residents and businesses and that uniting them is crucial. He added that in terms of diversity, Wallingford did set up an overview committee and made sure that various constituencies were represented during the process.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

▪ Planning Director Report - John Rahaim, Department of Planning and Development

Chair Finrow stated the Commission was primarily interest in neighborhood planning and incentive zoning.

Mr. Rahaim stated that the Mayor, Councilmember Clark and others were interest in updating neighborhood plans for the first time since the 1990s. He noted that, when they were first done, all 37 plans were done at once. Mr. Rahaim stated that this meant the City was often unavailable to help or did not have the resources to do so, so during the updating process all plans will not be done at once. He added that the first proposed step is to look at all the plans and decide which are lacking, then bring them up to the level of other plans so there is a degree of consistency throughout all the plans.

Mr. Rahaim noted that there are currently two options being considered for how to approach the updates. He stated that one is look at the growth targets and take on those neighborhoods that are out of sync with the growth targets first. He added that the other option is to do it sector by sector,

following SDOT's breakdown of the city into six sectors which was done in anticipation of doing transportation corridor plans.

Mr. Rahaim stated that different plans will require different levels of engagement. He noted that some will need overhauls and others will only need tweaking. Mr. Rahaim noted that the process will start in 2008 and that the remainder of this year will be spent discussing the various proposals for completing the updates. He added that overall facilitation of the process will be done by DPD, with DON doing some outreach and that Parks, SDOT and Housing will all be involved. Mr. Rahaim stated that early next year DPD will do a background piece on the plans, including data on each neighborhood, a baseline of plans and policies citywide, and developing training programs for those who will be involved. He added that DPD does not want neighborhood plans developed that are contrary to citywide plans and policies.

Commissioner Johnson asked what the time frame is for each plan. Mr. Rahaim responded that, if done by sectors, each sector would be two years.

Commissioner Foster stated that some complaints about the previous plan had been lack of city involvement and asked how the Commission could help get more resources to DPD to complete the plan. Mr. Rahaim replied that the Commission could help but continuing to raise the point that the initiative is a major one and significant amount of resources would be required to complete it.

Commissioner Hough-Beck suggested that the city should work to utilize the major resource of the University of Washington.

Commissioner Amato said the corridor-based approach makes a lot of sense, so that adjacent neighborhoods could be looked at together, and the pressures of these areas on each other could be seen as well. She wondered if the City was going to allow neighborhoods to consider zoning changes and potential changes to the Comp Plan. Mr. Rahaim stated that could be the type of thing they will be looking at.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission had meetings scheduled with the Executive and Councilmember Clark to discuss this issue in the future.

▪ **Discussion: Industrial Lands Strategy Observations and Commission Recommendations
- Commission Staff**

Recusal & Disclosures: Commissioner Mark Johnson works for ESA Adolfson which prepared some of the information for the Industrial Lands Strategy. Commissioner Marshall Foster works for Mithun which has looked into options for industrial land development that involves non-industrial uses. Commissioner Eanes works for Hewitt Architects and he is the project manager for a couple of projects in industrial-zoned lands and is involved in the planning of the Dearborn project. Commissioner Amalia Leighton works for SvR Design Company and is involved in the design of the Burke Gilman trail. Commissioner Colie Hough Beck stated that, the Port of Seattle is a client of her firm, Hough Beck & Baird.

Ms. Wilson presented a draft of the Commission's report on the Industrial Lands Strategy. She stated that the first half will seek to document the process while the second half will include the Commission's observations and recommendations. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission had recently approved the

key themes but reminded Commissioners that it was a working document and could be changed. She added that Stakeholders would be reviewing the key themes and weighing in on them at the next public meeting. Ms. Wilson noted that the next step was developing the Commission's observations which would document what the Commission observed and not their opinions or recommendations. Ms. Wilson mentioned that recommendations would include items like code amendments or policy changes.

Commissioner Chris Fiori gave his perspective on the event that he facilitated. He noted that everyone wants certainty – public bodies, private sector, real estate industry and industrial businesses. Commissioner Fiori mentioned that in other cities they are providing that certainty. He added that some are moving towards preservation, others towards housing, but that none are going at it haphazardly, as Settle is. Commissioner Fiori stated that, in terms of framing the issue, there needs to be significant public outreach to show the public how valuable industrial lands are and how they assist the rest of the city's job base. He noted that the definition of industrial is still up in the air and the question remains, what is Research and Development? Commissioner Fiori concluded that if there is no production, should there be protection and suggested the Commission whittle their report down to a one or two pager.

Commissioner Amato stated there was a lot of discussion of the increase of FAR in industrial areas and that many businesses said they would benefit if it went up. She noted that many industrial owners stated the need of public education on the importance of industrial lands in order to preserve and sustain growth in these areas. Commissioner Amato noted that owners said they needed complete preservation of industrial land yet also stated that they needed more amenities for their employees. She added that, in terms of transportation, it seemed that it was very important for the infrastructure to be there so these businesses could flourish and that more focus should be on the roadways, the radii of turning trucks, etc. Commissioner Amato questioned how to encourage and preserve industrial businesses while ensuring that the City improves the transportation network.

Commissioner Hough-Beck stated that she was concerned about the Key Theme that discussed the disconnect between the Comp Plan goals and the practice of city planners issuing permits in industrial areas. Ms. Wilson responded that staff would clarify this point. Commissioner Hough-Beck noted that there are a lot of these areas with industrial zoning, that they are all different and need to be viewed as such.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated that transportation is important and should be looked at in terms of transportation corridors. She added that some should be more transit and bike friendly but others should be more freight friendly to ensure that freight can get through.

Commissioner Knapton noted that the Commission should emphasize the unique location that industrial lands exist in relation to regional transit and the benefit that is to these lands. She urged looking at industrial lands in terms of the middle-income wage jobs they provide. Commissioner Knapton suggested looking at discreet zoning within each industrially-zoned area.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald stated that there could be opportunities to increase FAR but keeping the framework of the current uses intact. He added that these could be enabled by better transportation for employees and that light rail could be a part.

Commissioner Tom Eanes noted that the limitation on FAR for industrial uses in industrial areas seems arbitrary. He wondered if the city is not concerned about height, it seems strange they should be

concerned about FAR. Commissioner Eanes added that, if FAR is eliminated, it becomes very important to define better what an industrial business is.

Commissioner Leighton stated that the Commission should work to help define fundamental question 8 – what are the competitive advantages Seattle has in terms of their industrial sector.

Commissioner Foster stated that because industrial uses are changing more and more, especially towards ‘clean’ industry, it might be time to explore the possibility of performance-based zoning. He suggested that the Commission consider how to build an effective coalition for the preservation of industrial lands and take a balanced approach of offering to protect some industrial land and also opening up some areas for housing development. Commissioner Foster noted that the City needs to work to provide infrastructure for both good industrial neighborhoods and residential neighborhoods.

Chair Finrow noted that Vancouver gives a good example of the pitfalls of valuing housing far more than jobs in policymaking.

Commissioner Johnson stated that he doesn’t think that all industrial land is sacred but does believe there should only be minor tweaks to the edges. He added that the newer industries are what need some special support but it is also critical to continue to support manufacturing, freight handling, and other standard industrial businesses. Commissioner Johnson noted that, in terms of a public policy basis for preserving the land, it’s preserving sustainable middle-class jobs and keeping the city a place where all kinds of people can live, not just the rich, poor and workers who commute long distances. He added that we need to look at long-term freezes on rezoning once we’ve established where our industrial areas are. Commissioner Johnson stated that there also appears to be a good policy basis for reducing allowable uses in industrial zones. He continued that we need to grow jobs in pace with the population growth here and emphasize our competitive advantage of possessing water, rail, and a very educated work force.

Commissioner Fiori stated that the Commission must figure out how to balance strong Research and Development and basic industrial sector with housing affordability and to figure out how land supply contributes to both.

Commissioner Amato said in terms of changing zoning even in small areas, the Commission should be very careful about how they talk about this. She added that the whole point of the Industrial Lands Strategy was to preserve industrial land, so even tweaks around the edges should be approached with caution and tone down the rhetoric when discussing it. Commissioner Amato mentioned an ordinance recently passed that dealt with freight corridors.

Rebecca Hertzfeld, Council Central Staff, stated that this was the Complete Streets legislation which states that, when DOT is planning projects, it should look at all modes of transportation, not just cars. She added that there was a specific element in it that dealt with freight corridors which stated some areas may not work for other modes if they primarily serve freight transit.

Chair Finrow stated the Commission will continue to shape their report into a more precise document. He noted the Commission should send comments on the current document to Barbara Wilson.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dave Gering, Executive Director of the Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC), stated the MIC is the official community steward of the Duwamish industrial area. He noted that they are comprised primarily of privately owned, family operated businesses that have been in Seattle for 50-100 years and that few people are aware of. Mr. Gering stated that these businesses are now enjoying a high degree of success and that this success can largely be tied to a thriving industry in China which the Seattle area is benefiting from. He noted that these businesses are healthy and want to get bigger but they are being displaced. Mr. Gering stated that zoning is so loose in industrial zones that permits are provided for non-industrial uses which drives the price of the land through the roof. He added that many healthy businesses learn from their landlord, that after their lease expires, they must leave, because rents will be raised substantially. He noted that the Growth Management Act has very good policies to protect industrial land – unfortunately, they are undermined everyday by; permitting decisions, zoning decisions, SDOT, SPU, and others.

Mr. Gering said he would submit a document with some important information about industrial lands to the Commission soon.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jerry Finrow adjourned the meeting at 9:06 am.