



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 8, 2007
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Tony To Chair; Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Kirsten Pennington,

Commission Staff

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

Commissioners Absent

Linda Amato, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough Beck, Chelsea Levy, Steve Sheehy

Guests

John Rahaim, Susan McLain, Gordon Clowers, DPD; Mimi Sheridan, Planning Commission (Ex-Officio)

In Attendance

Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff;

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 7:30 am.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ **Chairs Report**

Chair Tony To reviewed the upcoming Commission meetings. He stated the Commission's annual holiday party will be held on Friday, December 7 at the home of Commissioner Marty Kaplan.

Chair To called attention to the fact that, because of the Thanksgiving Holiday, the next Full Commission Meeting will not be until Thursday, December 13th from 3:00 – 5:30 pm. He added that this will be the last full commission meeting in 2007 and that the Commission will get a presentation from the architects who have been hired to complete the DADU User guide and will follow up on other key important projects.

Chair To noted that there will be a public reception and farewell event for John Rahaim on Friday, November 16th at the Seattle Architectural Foundation. He added that more details are forthcoming.

- **Minutes Approval**

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the October 25, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the motion and made a friendly amendment that acronyms be spelled out. Commissioner McDonald also requested that some statements regarding the affordability of condo units relating to condominium fees be clarified in the minutes. Commissioner Martin Kaplan made a friendly amendment that some of his statements regarding rentals and condominiums also be clarified. The motion was approved with one abstention.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **Planning Director Report / Farewell Address
- John Rahaim, Planning Director, DPD**

Chair To stated that he wanted to welcome John Rahaim, Seattle's Planning Director who will soon be headed south to San Francisco. He noted that this will be John's farewell address to the Planning Commission and asked the Commission to take a moment to thank Mr. Rahaim for all of his great work for the City of Seattle for the past 8 years. Chair To added that the Commission will certainly miss his vision and passion for urban design and wished him the best of luck in San Francisco.

Chair To asked Mr. Rahaim to discuss his thoughts about his time in Seattle.

Mr. Rahaim thanked the Commission for all their hard work over the years. He noted that his work was cut out for him in San Francisco, as development seemed to be the number one issue there.

Mr. Rahaim noted that he wanted to talk about some of his accomplishments. He stated that they included the creation of City Design, which became a voice for urban design and made a case for paying attention to the public realm, which wasn't really there before. Mr. Rahaim noted that Planning used to be a variety of components, including Department of Construction and Land Use, City Design, and the Comprehensive Planning team. He added that he had helped pull them all together and now they had really congealed to a great team.

Mr. Rahaim expressed that Planning had also begun to learn how to take issues of sustainability beyond just a building, and has begun to work on sustainable infrastructure and neighborhoods. He added that Steve Moddemeyer, who was working on a new way of doing capital budgeting, has done a great deal to make this happen.

Mr. Rahaim mentioned that planning is broadening its reach, and taking more of a role in implementation. He noted that in the past, bricks and mortar had been for someone else to accomplish, but there's a growing movement for planning to play more of a role here. Mr. Rahaim continued that this gives more credibility to planning and teaches planners how to make better plans.

Commissioner Finrow stated that he agreed a great deal with the importance of planning playing more of a role in implementation and that more coordination between departments was also very important.

Chair To stated that it would be helpful for cities to do more tracking of what they are achieving in terms of implementation of plans. He added that way citizens can feel like there's progress, not just a whole bunch of planning.

Commissioner Mark Johnson noted that it was easy to get caught up in simply working to accommodate growth, but it remains important to ensure people are happy living in denser areas. Seattle has done a great deal to make that happen, as now even the wealthiest people want to live downtown – that used to not be the case.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan asked Mr. Rahaim what some of the differences between Seattle and San Francisco were. Mr. Rahaim responded that, in San Francisco, there was tremendous public involvement in land use decisions. He noted that, in addition, the development process becomes very politicized, as developments can be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson asked what Mr. Rahaim would miss. He replied that he wished he could see the neighborhood planning process unfold, and see if the city could in fact engage a wide array of people.

Mr. Rahaim stated he truly enjoyed his time in Seattle, and once again thanked all the Commissioners for their service.

▪ **ACTION: Affordable Housing Action Agenda**
- **Discussion and Vote**

Chair To stated that the Commissioners should recall that the Commission reviewed the Affordable Housing Action Agenda at the last meeting. Commissioners Finrow and Johnson briefed the Commission on the document and the Commission's recommendations.

Chair To asked for disclosures or recusals.

Recusal & Disclosures: Chair Tony To stated that he worked for Homesite, a non-profit affordable housing organization. Commissioner Leslie Miller stated she was the chair of the Southeast District Council.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission had started working on the Action Agenda a year ago. She noted that the Housing, Neighborhood and Urban Centers (HNUC) Committee had done the heavy lifting on the issue and that the Commission would hopefully approve the report today and release it in 2008. Ms. Wilson thanked Commissioners Finrow, Johnson, Knapton, Fiori and McDonald for their specific and thoughtful comments on the document.

Casey Mills discussed the changes that had been made to the Action Agenda since the previous Commission review of the document.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington suggested that when mentioning the transportation infrastructure it should also include transportation systems. Commissioner Finrow noted that this was a friendly amendment.

Commissioner Miller stated that it would be good to recognize that improvements to public amenities were to assist new residents, but also to benefit residents already residing in neighborhoods. Commissioner Finrow recognized this as a friendly amendment.

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the Affordable Housing Action Agenda with the friendly amendments. Commissioner Mark Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

▪ **Presentation: Livable South Downtown DEIS**

With opening remarks from Mimi Sheridan, Planning Commission (Ex Officio) to the Livable South Downtown Advisory Group

- **Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers, DPD**

Chair To welcomed Mimi Sheridan, a former Planning Commissioner who was appointed to represent the Commission on the Livable South Downtown Advisory Board. Chair To thanked Ms. Sheridan for her commitment to the Commission and her willingness to remain involved in the work of the Commission well beyond her term. In addition, Chair To welcomed DPD Planners, Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers.

Commissioner To then asked for any disclosures and recusals. There were none.

Ms. Sheridan gave a presentation on what she believed to be the main issues that had been discussed at the advisory group. She noted that they were; how much density is too much? Where should it go? What types of housing? Where? How to preserve the character of the historic districts while encouraging appropriate development; How to preserve small businesses and the unique character of Little Saigon; Freight mobility; Views from stadiums; Walk ability and connections; Urban design; Sustainability, beyond energy; and a broad range of public benefits (affordable housing, open space, urban design amenities, preservation assistance, etc.) in exchange for density, with an undetermined mechanism.

Ms. McLain discussed the project goals, objects, and timeline of public meetings that had occurred regarding South Downtown thus far. She noted the future timing for the legislative package that would be forwarded once the process was over. Ms. McLain stated that the first package would not include industrial zones and that the Mayor had made it clear that any proposed upzones would include public benefits, including inventive zoning and/or TDR programs.

Mr. Clowers discussed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for South Downtown. He stated that the report covered a lot of ground that would need to be covered by future projects were they to go forward, and excluded water, plants and animals from the analysis. Mr. Clowers added that the report does address height, bulk and scale issues.

Comment: This statement seems a bit clumsy can you reword it? Thanks

Mr. Clowers noted that the proposed alternatives are relatively consistent with neighborhood plans, though potential rezones of industrial lands to other uses would not be consistent with the Manufacturing Industrial Center neighborhood plan. He added that the report analyzes noise levels along highways, and near the Viaduct and I-5, there appears to be a problem with building housing there, as the noise levels are very high. Mr. Clowers mentioned that there was also analysis on

transportation impacts, and it appeared there were certain areas where congestion would slow down buses. He continued that there would also be the loss of a significant number of parking spaces.

Chair To noted that Ms. McLain and Mr. Clowers had worked hard to engage the community on this issue, and regardless of the outcome of the project, should be commended for their efforts.

Commissioner Kaplan asked whether the surface option for the Viaduct could change the calculations regarding noise levels near highways. Mr. Clowers and Ms. Sheridan responded that no matter what option was chosen for the Viaduct, the decibel levels in the study area near SR-99 would not significantly change.

Commissioner Kaplan asked how much a developer's vision for the area had on the study. Mr. Clowers answered that there were developers on the advisory groups, but for the most part they have not been centrally involved, allowing staff to do their analysis without much intrusion.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements stated it would be helpful to show adjacent zoning to the study area on maps of the proposed alternatives. He wondered if the advisory group discussed how the site could serve the city, rather than what stakeholders near the site wanted to see. Mr. Clowers replied that the growth projections the city used for the area were generally in line with the regional council's projections for the area.

Commissioner Johnson asked what Little Saigon's vision for their neighborhood was. Ms. McClain responded that they didn't have a strong direction, in part because they lack a neighborhood plan. Chair To added that the community did not have well-defined, long-term community representation due to the youth of the neighborhood, which made it difficult to understand exactly what the neighborhood wanted.

Commissioner Kay Knapton stated that one of her major concerns was the King Street station, and ensuring that it could be more of a connector for buses, rail, and linkages to the ferries. Ms. McLain stated that the city is also interested in this, and there has already been a lot of discussion trying to achieve these goals.

Chair To noted the lack of open space in the area, and stated that this was a major concern of his.

Ms. Wilson asked what the best places for the Commission to weigh in on would be. Mr. Clowers answered that major topics including housing, transportation, sustainability and industrial lands.

Commissioner To stated he was concerned about the industrial lands, particularly the fact that the new proposed size of use limits might not be passed before changes to South Downtown and South Lake Union happen. He added that the South Downtown proposal could set a precedent for other industrial lands, and the Commission needs to address this.

Commissioner Johnson stated that Commission input should focus on more broad policy issues, as there might not be a great deal of value to combing through the DEIS with a fine-toothed comb. He added that there would likely be a great deal of value, however, to weighing in on the proposed alternatives.

Ms. McLain stated that while there was a mid-December deadline for weighing in on the specifics of the DEIS, there was a significantly later deadline on the city taking input on the proposed alternatives.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair To adjourned the meeting at 9:01 am.