



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Grace Kim, Chair

Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 13, 2016

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Eileen Canola, Lauren Craig, Sandra Fried, Grace Kim, Kara Martin, Tim Parham, Marj Press, David Shelton, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Michael Austin, Keiko Budech, Jake McKinstry, Julio Sanchez

Commission Staff: John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director

In Attendance: Cindi Barker

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

Chair Grace Kim called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. She reminded the Commissioners of several upcoming meetings.

Minutes Approval

Commissioner Tim Parham moved to adopt the September 22, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Sandra Fried seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Seattle Planning Commission Interim Executive Director Valerie Kinast made several announcements. She stated that the Industrial Lands RFQ has been released. Planning Commission staff will be reviewing it. Meetings with Councilmembers Johnson and Herbold are being set up for the Commissioners. Councilmember Johnson's workshops to review the proposed urban village boundaries and rezones are coming up this Fall. The Planning Commission has been invited to attend the November 10th meeting of the Seattle Parks Board. They will be discussing the Parks Development Plan. Commissioners Marj Press and Patti Wilma volunteered to attend.

Briefing: Urban Village Boundary Expansions and Rezones

Nick Welch from the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) presented an overview of the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) boundary and rezone maps. The Mayor's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Group had the opportunity to preview five of these maps at the end of September. The maps were created using the MHA foundational principles, such as

the Mayor's goal of 6,000 new affordable housing units and a variety of housing types in single family zones, as well as a series of community-based principles, such as appropriate transitions and a wide range of housing types in all of the MHA rezone areas citywide.

Mr. Welch provided an overview of the proposed zoning changes shown on the maps. Each of the zoning changes starts with a "typical" MHA increase that changes the allowed Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR) and heights (typically an increase of one additional story). Additional MHA zoning changes in urban villages include rezones of single family zones and boundary expansions. To provide additional housing options in single family zones, the Residential Single Lot (RSL) zoning category would be applied to create higher density opportunities such as cottage housing. To ensure smooth transitions between zones, entire blocks would be given a single zoning category; the Low Rise zoning category would be used between higher density and lower density zones; and building setbacks would be required where most appropriate. The rezones would create more housing near parks, schools, and transit.

Mr. Welch provided an overview of the urban villages that are proposed for expansion. The HALA team used ten urban villages with proposed expansions in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan as a starting point. These were refined to include local factors such as proximity to frequent and reliable transit service. For example, both the Othello and Crown Hill urban villages have been proposed for expansion based on their proximity to either light rail or frequent bus service. The Commissioners asked when the expansion areas were identified based on transit service criteria and asked if there is a plan to expand the list of expansion areas based on future transit investments. Mr. Welch answered that the current proposed expansion areas will require a FLUM amendment in 2017, and there are no other plans for additional expansion areas at this time. The Commissioners asked why the future Graham Street station area was not considered. Mr. Welch stated including that station area depends on whether the upcoming Sound Transit 3 ballot measure passes. An urban village around the potential 130th Street station is currently included. The Commissioners expressed disappointment that the Graham Street station area is not being included. That community has been organizing and advocating for an urban village for a long time. The Commissioners asked whether there are other areas that were not proposed for boundary expansions but now meet the criteria based on recent transit investments. Mr. Welch responded that the Aurora/Licton Springs and Ballard urban villages would most likely meet the criteria now.

The Commissioners stated that the rezones and boundary expansions present a chicken/egg situation – more transit is often driven by density, not the other way around. They stated that higher opportunity/low displacement risk areas should get a bigger zoning increase to add housing capacity. The Commissioners commented that the maps don't recognize existing assets and infrastructure in certain neighborhoods. Connecting urban village boundaries to existing commercial nodes should be considered in order to create multiple nodes within villages. The Commissioners encouraged finding creative ways to encourage family-sized housing. The Low-Rise 1 (LR1) zone currently has a density limit that could be eliminated, but this change might result in development projects consisting of entirely small studio apartments. Planners should explore ways to ensure the inclusion of larger family-sized units. The Commissioners expressed interest in encouraging production of affordable units in certain urban villages, such as Othello. For example, higher density zoning could be applied in these areas with higher MHA requirements. The Commissioners asked about ways to encourage the MHA performance option to build onsite affordable housing in areas with high displacement. Mr. Welch responded by saying that the MHA payment option would result in construction of more affordable housing units, with the additional benefit of being more strategic about where to build those units where they are needed most.

The Commissioners expressed interest in seeing more urban village areas proposed for expansion, especially additional urban villages in north Seattle such as Wallingford and Fremont. They stated that basing the expansion criteria on frequent transit creates a moving target and is based only on investments by Metro and Sound Transit. Other methodologies and criteria could be considered, for example “units of activity” (e.g. commercial activity) as well as other capital improvements and infrastructure. A suggestion was made that the proposed rezones and boundary expansions could be more aggressive around commercial areas, areas that are currently experiencing increased development, and in areas of high opportunity.

The Commissioners had a discussion about the proposed zoning changes in single family areas within urban villages. They suggested considering zoning that would allow higher capacity housing in those areas. Mr. Welch commented that the RSL zoning code would be revised to include a variety of options such as cottage housing, duplexes, etc. The Commissioners discussed the possibility of changing all single family areas in urban villages to Low Rise zoning. They also noted that RSL zoning would increase the diversity of housing types and would help with the transition to single family zones outside of urban villages. Mr. Welch noted that OPCD will be collecting input on the proposed boundaries and rezones through the HALA team’s Consider It website and will be holding 5 community meetings during November-January. Councilmember Johnson’s office will also be holding 9 or 10 separate workshops. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Welch for his presentation.

Briefing: Waterfront Seattle

Marshall Foster, Director, Office of the Waterfront, provided an overview and update on the status of planning and design for the Seattle Waterfront. He described the overall project timeline and highlighted several discrete project components. The Final EIS for the project will be published at the end of October. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2019 after the viaduct is demolished and will last for 36 months until 2022. Mr. Foster highlighted a list of key project partners, including public agencies, private sector companies, and non-profit organizations, and discussed the project budget, which is currently approximately \$700 million. He described the various elements of the project that will be constructed within the right-of-way, including vehicle lanes, a cycle track, vegetated green stormwater infrastructure, and pedestrian amenities.

The seawall project is nearing completion and will provide valuable habitat for juvenile salmon along the shoreline. All pedestrian intersections and the cycle track will be designed to promote pedestrian safety. A series of interesting retail kiosks will provide a variety of retail opportunities along the waterfront. The Commissioners asked questions about the proposed street configuration for transit, freight, and cars. Mr. Foster stated that the project’s EIS includes the most conservative configuration, but the project will have the ability to stay flexible and change lane configurations over time. Mr. Foster highlighted new components of the waterfront design – the Overlook Walk, a proposed expansion of the Seattle Aquarium, and a renovated Pier 62/63. The Market Front project, an expansion of the Pike Place Market, is almost complete and will integrate with the Overlook Walk. The Commissioners asked how these projects emerged to be early priorities. Mr. Foster responded by saying that the delays of Bertha, the tunnel boring machine under the project area, have forced them to identify new early action projects.

The Office of the Waterfront is exploring the possibility of a Local Improvement District (LID) to help fund the waterfront project. A real estate appraisal is underway to determine the potential extent of the LID. Estimates are in the range of \$200 million. The Commissioners asked about the geographic area of the LID. Mr. Foster stated that has not been determined yet, but they are currently looking at a large

area. The Commissioners asked whether additional revenue from increase cruise ship traffic in Seattle will help fund the project. Mr. Foster replied that those revenues are not available to the project, but the increase in cruise ship traffic has generated a lot of interest in enhancing the waterfront experience for tourists as well as Seattleites. He stated that a new shuttle will be funded to bring cruise ship passengers to the waterfront. The Commissioners commented that there could be interest from local commuters in local transit or shuttle options along the waterfront to connect areas such as Queen Anne/Seattle Center with downtown. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Foster for his presentation.

Public Comment

Cindi Barker commented that the intent of the MHA regulations is not only to add density, but the upzones will also add capacity where it is needed. Neighborhoods such as Rainier Beach will need additional investments to accommodate that additional capacity. She also commented that neighborhoods will lose their character if the rezones are implemented too quickly. She stated that Councilmember Johnson's community workshops are primarily focused on those urban villages that are proposed for expansion. She requested that the Planning Commission suggest additional consideration of the urban villages that are not being proposed for expansion.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.