



# City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

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## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JUNE 9, 2005 FINAL MEETING MINUTES

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**Commissioners in Attendance:** Steve Sheehy, Chair; Jerry Finrow, Vice-Chair; George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Lyn Krizanich, John Owen, Joe Quintana, Mimi Sheridan

**Commissioners Absent:** Anjali Bhagat, Hilda Blanco, Tom Eanes, Tony To

**Commission Staff:** Barbara Wilson, Director; Scott Dvorak, Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

**Guests:** Laura Lutz, OED; Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff; Sung Yang, Mayor's Office

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 3:08 pm.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

- **Approval of May 26, 2005 Minutes**

Commissioner John Owen moved and Commissioner Jerry Finrow seconded that the May 26 minutes be approved. The minutes were approved unanimously.

- **Chair & Staff Report**

- **Schedule & Housekeeping Updates**

Commissioner Mimi Sheridan noted that the MRP will hold a meeting on June 27. Chair Sheehy called attention to several of the meetings mentioned on the back of the agenda, most notably the upcoming June 14 HNUC meeting and the June 16 Land Use and Transportation meeting. Executive Director Barbara Wilson notes that the Land Use and Transportation meeting will last only until 5 (not 5:30 as indicated on schedule) and that the HNUC meeting is in room 4080 (not 4096 our usual meeting room), Kristian Kofoed from the DPD will be at the HNUC meeting to discuss the Northgate Housing Study and that the committee will also be discussing Center City Strategy and Downtown Zoning. At the Land Use and Transportation meeting, Ms. Wilson noted that there will possibly be someone talking about the Viaduct financing.

- **Project Reports**

- Neighborhood Business District

Ms. Wilson expressed her thanks to Commissioners Sheehy, Eanes, Quintana and Owen for attending the UDP Committee meeting and noted that their planned presentation to the Committee was cancelled but that the letter had gone out. Chair Sheehy added that the Committee ran out of time because of a lengthy discussion of the Broadway Proposal and that Commissioner Owen's letter was well received by the Committee.

- Center City/South Downtown

Scott Dvorak stated that the Mayor has approved an Advisory Committee and that Commissioner Sheridan had been asked to be on the Committee representing the Planning Commission and had accepted. The first meeting will be scheduled for the end of June and that they plan on holding 7-8 meetings as well as two open houses.

- North Bay

Ms. Wilson pointed out we have received a letter from the Port of Seattle in response the Commissions April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005 letter. The letter is included in the Commissioner's folders for their information.

- **Commissioner Spotlight**

This month's spotlight focused on Commissioner Chris Fiori. Commissioner Fiori shared information about himself that included his professional and personal background.

- **Update on Industrial Lands Strategy**

Sung Yang from the Mayor's Office introduced himself to the Commission and explained that he has been given the task of tracking land use issues for the Mayor. He then provided an update on the industrial land background paper for August 1<sup>st</sup> and how he sees that paper working into a larger effort to develop an industrial lands strategy. He noted that he is looking forward to a future roundtable discussion on industrial lands and that Mayor Nickels is very committed to industrial land protection. They plan on having the first draft of this study by July 1<sup>st</sup> and would then spend July editing and revising with the final study going to City Council on August 1<sup>st</sup>. In this particular study they intend to provide information on current conditions and the current, future predictions. The first portion of the document will provide information on the current use and availability of the industrial land in the City - highlighting zoning versus use, vacancy rate, leasing rate, conversion pressure and employment. The second portion of the report will provide information on the current forecast job growth, land demand and development capacity. The working group plans to get comments from real estate brokers to include this forecasting information by August 1. After completion of the report would be an appropriate time to hold a roundtable discussion to begin developing a full-fledged strategy. They would look to the Planning Commission to help out with that process.

Commissioner Lyn Krizanich asked about the timing of the study and how it works with Comp Plan considerations in the autumn. Council Central Staff, Bob Morgan responded that the Council usually gets the Executive recommendations on Comp Plan amendments around August 1<sup>st</sup>. A hearing is then scheduled for 30 days later, generally at the beginning of September. In September / early October for a final discussion and vote.

Commissioner Joe Quintana asked about whether they are taking in to consideration a margin of safety in terms of the employment and demand projections. Laura Lutz answered that the study will have ranges that will accommodate some variance - from more conservative to more dramatic. Commissioner Quintana wondered if the study addresses nuisance issues, compatibility uses as well as encroachment issues. Ms. Lutz responded that it will be dealt with to a small extent in the study but that component will be an important part of the larger strategy development later on. Mr. Yang added that may need to continue more research and study even after August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements asked whether they are attempting to make a prediction of how the City will be in 20 to 50 years. He asked if we will be able to bring in thinkers to determine whether our projections are relative. Mr. Yang answered that it is always tough making projections and that they will need to make their assumptions clear. Ms. Lutz added that looking beyond 20 years may be tough if not impossible. There will be changes in approaches to business which may impact land needed but that the City continues to believe that industrial demand will not recede and indeed will hold steady, particularly in sectors/area in which we hold competitive advantage.

Commissioner Owen questioned whether the study included the ecology of uses – the family of interconnected uses and whether a comparative regional perspective is being included in the study. Mr. Yang answered that they are not looking at the interconnected uses at in depth in the initial study but that it will be a part of the full-fledged strategy. He noted that this is one of the limitations that they have to create an accurate forecast - to use figures that are currently available. As for the regional perspective, Mr. Yang stated that Tom Hauger with DPD is looking at the county-wide planning policies. Commissioner Quintana noted that he believed there were cluster analyses done by the PSRC. Ms. Lutz stated they have that work and that they have additional similar analysis conducted by the City.

Commissioner Finrow mentioned that where cities are studying this issue they have taken an aggressive regional approach and that he did not see how we could do that in two months. He feels that their initial study is simply going to reveal that they really need to spend more time to study this. He added that we are sitting on an important piece of property that is the first of the dominoes – the Port's North Bay property. He emphasized that we should be asking what we want the region/city to be like and not just providing a passive view of what might happen. There is a need to be more proactive than that. He asked what the Mayor's view of the Port proposal was.

Mr. Yang answered that they had just gotten the proposal and are still analyzing it. He reiterated that the Mayor is committed to industrial use and is not intending to compromise that position. That said, Mr. Yang added that the City would consider a land swap near Smith Cove where the City would get a better park location and the Port would get land it could develop as housing. This is the only area the Mayor would consider housing in the entire North Bay development area. Mr. Yang expressed his thanks for Commissioner Finrow's comments and remarked that they recognize the limitations of this study. He noted that they are producing something for the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline but the Mayor's office is committed to a long term process to create a strategy. Commissioner Clements asked if the council will accept the study. Mr. Yang answered that he could not predict but that he knew that Barb Wilson and Commission members will meet

with Councilmember Steinbrueck to see if he is getting what he wants. Councilmember Steinbrueck is aware that there is a short time frame so Mr. Yang feels that he is on the same page.

Commissioner George Blomberg expressed that this is a very exciting project and that the Commission is interested in assisting in this work. He feels that this study will be an important first step.

Commissioner Fiori asked if it is a study or a strategy. Mr. Yang answered that it was just a study for August 1.

## **COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

### **▪ Briefing: Waterfront Concept Plan**

Guillermo Romano from CityDesign began the briefing by passing out a handout that included illustrations of some of the concepts they are currently working on for the waterfront area. The work group has been meeting every week for the past three months and have included meetings with SDOT, DPD and Parks Department. They are getting ready to do provide summer update at three meetings held on consecutive evenings beginning on June 23 – the meetings will be getting input on dealing with Viaduct closure and construction impacts.

CityDesign has been conducting workshops with an Interdepartmental Team (IDT) where the waterfront was divided into three sections. This was a very productive effort – this group has been developing the Concept Plan. The Concept Plan is a diagram and it is a program – it is not a specific plan. Instead, it intended to show the types of things the City would like to see along the waterfront with some suggestions as to where we would like to see it. In some ways it could be described as a wish list by the City for whoever designs the waterfront. The Concept Plan will be a key document in the call for entries when the City goes out to hire a planning/urban design firm to come up with the formal plan. Some of the components of the Concept Plan are: development opportunities, land use changes and possible revisions to the land use code, and collaboration – public/private partnerships.

The approach to the Concept Plan has been to look at the waterfront as a sequence of icons and spaces. Waterfront visitors will be lead through and directed to the space through a series of paths, spaces, and icons. At several important points the visitor will be able to look around them and be clued in to where they are in the City and how they can proceed to their next destination by visual clues.

The Concept has been created in layers. Mr. Romano brought along graphics depicting two of the layers: “connection” and “open spaces” as well as a graphic with details of how the waterfront could be laid out in terms of sequence of spaces from the building wall, public space, sidewalk, street, streetcar, street, and then public space along the waterfront with access to piers and the businesses on the piers. The public space/promenade along the waterfront will need to be flexible space, accommodating many different types of uses and uses that might change with the seasons or over time. This activity zone is continuous along the whole length of the downtown/central waterfront.

There are three important features along the waterfront. The Seattle Art Museum Olympic Sculpture Park being developed at the north edge of the area in Belltown, the Pike Place Market and a new connection for the Market to the waterfront, and Colman Dock and its planned redevelopment by Washington Department of Transportation. There have also been several locations identified where shallow water “restoration” or “re-creation” may be desirable – Pier 48 near Colman Dock, near the aquarium and along the waterfront at the Olympic Sculpture Park.

We have been using the term “open space” during this project, but we are changing that to “public space” as a more accurate term for the type of spaces we are talking about. Public, active, urban spaces. There will be elements of green at some points – but generally these will be active spaces.

At Pike Place Market they worked with the engineers to create a better layout for creating a lid over the emerging tunnel and provide a better opportunity to create a connection between the Market and the waterfront. There will be an extension of Victor Steinbrueck Park with access to the waterfront near the aquarium and the new activity pier being redeveloped by the Parks Department.

Commissioner Quintana observed that as they develop their iconic links they are going from past to the future. He asked if there was a link to the Space Needle. Mr. Romano answered that the Space Needle was identified.

Mr. Romano noted that the development growth in Belltown may allow us at some point to lid the Viaduct there and they would work to create an icon at the tunnel entrance.

Commissioner Clements pointed out that 4 feet may not be enough for a bike lane as indicated on the detailed layout map. Mr. Romano indicated that that would be 4 feet for a one way bicycle lane – there would be a bicycle lane on either side of the street, one for each direction. The group has been working with SDOT which indicated that they could live with a 4 foot lane in this location though it is somewhat below their normal standards.

Commissioner Finrow asked about funding of the surface improvements. Mr. Romano responded that they would be discussing this tomorrow at their advisory group meeting. He added that the study has been estimated to cost \$2.5 million and that they currently only have about \$500,000. There is no money earmarked specifically for surface improvements. The City will be responsible for all surface improvements – it is not part of the \$4 billion budget proposed for the tunnel option.

Commissioner Finrow wondered whether there are any Comp Plan adjustments needed. Mr. Romano replied that there are shoreline regulations that come into play. WSDOT is working on acquiring Pier 48 as part of their Colman Dock redevelopment. That may open up water access for the Pioneer Square neighborhood.

Commissioner Sheridan questioned why shallow water re-creation at Pier 48. It struck her as ironic since Pioneer Square is there historically because of its direct access to deep water. Mr. Romano answered simply that it was studied and was identified as a place that this could happen.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the policy environment and if there was an official plan and time frame for the waterfront plan. Mr. Romano replied that there will be open houses in June and a briefing to Council in the fall. They are expecting a resolution with a master plan to be adopted by the Council in the fall and they then would hire a consultant or have a competition. He noted that the master plan would be the Concept Plan showing what we want the waterfront to be.

Commissioner Clements asked how certain they were that the tunnel will be funded and built. Mr. Romano responded that they are not sure and that SDOT and WSDOT are including a rebuild option. CityDesign asked whether they should create an alternative plan in case the tunnel was not built but they were told to not to use their limited time and resources and that option – instead they should focus on a tunnel option. Commissioner Quintana stated that the focus has been on the Viaduct and the seawall and waterfront planning has been detached but should it be molded closer to each other. Mr. Romano replied that actually it has been and that they have been working very closely together.

Commissioner Finrow noted that the ability to portray a successful compelling waterfront will go a long way to getting the second half of the money needed to build the project. He asked if there where anything the Commission could do to help secure funding. Mr. Romano answered that promoting their work to the Mayor and City Council and helping them to get the budget they needed to do their work.

Commissioner Quintana noted that DPD's priority seems to be focused currently on South Downtown and wondered whether it shouldn't be more focused on the waterfront. Mr. Romano replied that there is much happening down there and that the Planning Department is working on many projects around the City –South Downtown is not the main focus of the department and the waterfront is getting its fair attention.

Ms. Wilson asked if there was any action to be taken by the Planning Commission. Chair Sheehy said that he will talk about this subject at the upcoming meeting between the Planning Commission and Design Commission chairs. Commissioner Finrow suggested that what might be helpful would be to have Mr. Romano or other CityDesign staff write a letter or provide information on how the Comp Plan will be affected the points in the project in which the Planning Commission will have an opportunity to participate or assist the waterfront planning efforts.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Sheehy asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 5:05 pm.