



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 23, 2006
APPROVED Meeting Minutes**

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Sheehy – Chair, Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Hilda Blanco, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Carl See, Mimi Sheridan

Commissioners Absent

George Blomberg, Tom Eanes, Valerie Kinast, Joe Quintana, Tony To

New Commissioner Appointees

Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson – Director, Scott Dvorak – Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil – Admin Assistant

Guests

Gordon Clower, Susan McLain, Mark Troxel, DPD; 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 by Chair Steve Sheehy.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ **Chair Report**

– **Introduction of New Commission Appointees**

Chair Sheehy introduced Michelle Mattox and Kevin McDonald noting that they are two of the five people appointed by Mayor Nickels for the open Planning Commissioners appointments. He noted that all five appointees will be confirmed by Council on April 12.

– **Upcoming Events and Meetings**

Chair Sheehy called special attention to the upcoming Executive Committee meeting on April 4; the South Lake Union Urban Center Neighborhood Plan Community Meeting also on April 4; the Housing, Neighborhood Planning and Urban Centers Committee meeting on April 17; and the Public Hearing on Potential 2006 Amendments to Seattle's Comprehensive Plan on April 12.

He noted that our next Full Commission meeting will be April 13 from 3:00-5:30 pm and the Commissioner Retreat will be held on April 27.

- **March 9, 2006 Minutes Approval**

ACTION: Commissioner Martin Kaplan moved that the March 9, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Chris Fiori seconded the approval. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Briefing – 2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendments**
- **Mark Troxel, Department of Planning & Development**

Mark Troxel handed out a description of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments. He noted that staff is has prepared threshold legislation for City Council. Ms. Wilson noted that document is available in Commissioner folders for review.

Mr. Troxel began with the proposed amendment that accompanies the update underway on the South Lake Union neighborhood plan to reflect the neighborhood's new status as an Urban Center which includes new growth targets and information on on-going City investments.

He reported that the next proposed amendment is to add a triangle of land bounded by Aurora, Denny, and Broad to the Uptown Urban Center. He stated that this area is not currently within a neighborhood planning area. It is surrounded by Urban Centers, but not included in any of them.

Commissioner Kaplan noted that Queen Anne Community Council had proposed for that parcel to be a part of Queen Anne and wondered why it was being put in Uptown. Mr. Troxel responded that he was unsure of the rationale but would get back to the Commission with more information.

Commissioner Mimi Sheridan asked about the public process. She noted that this area belongs in an Urban Center yet Queen Anne is an Urban Village. She added that it feels as though there is a gap in communication as Queen Anne, which is different than Uptown, clearly wants it in their area. Mr. Troxel stated that he will follow up on this.

Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow asked if Mr. Troxel knew what the process was for determining an amendment such as this and what kind of public process is required. Mr. Troxel replied that the amendment was received from the Queen Anne Community Council. Commissioner Sheridan asked if property owners had been involved. Mr. Troxel said that they had not and DPD's public process has not reached out that far yet as this is still the preliminary determination of whether something will move forward for more analysis and review.

Chair Sheehy asked what process exists before a person submits an application. Mr. Troxel replied that there is no specific process, that any citizen or group can submit an application. He added that proposed amendments come in a variety of ways; some come through the general application process and others through planning efforts.

Mr. Troxel continued discussing the proposed amendments. There is an amendment to identify all, or a portion, of the North Highline area as a Planned Annexation Area. He noted that DPD is analyzing the annexation in terms of cost to the City for providing services to that area vs. the amount of revenue generated in the area. Chair Sheehy asked if Mr. Troxel could tell him generally where North Highline area is. Mr. Troxel answered that it is the White Center and Boulevard Park neighborhoods immediately to the south of West Seattle and north of Burien. Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff, pointed out that this is the Mayor's proposal and that City Council has questions and has formed a special committee to research it.

Mr. Troxel continued with the next proposal which is to re-designate one parcel in SE Seattle from single-family residential to multi-family residential on the Future Land Use map – this would allow the parcel to be rezoned in the future. Chair Sheehy asked if that was a property owner application. Mr. Troxel replied that it was. Commissioner Mahlon Clements asked if that was the only property that sticks out as needing this zoning change. Vice-Chair Finrow asked Mr. Troxel what his recollection was of the station area planning in that corridor and the degree to which this proposal supports that station area planning. Mr. Troxel replied that he feels that these decisions augment station area planning. Vice-Chair Finrow wondered if it made any sense to go back and revisit the station area planning in general, now that the project is under construction. Mr. Troxel noted that the city is undertaking the SE Seattle initiative and that the light rail corridor is central to how Southeast Seattle is going to change. Vice-Chair Finrow noted that Seattle has an opportunity to really go back and look at and tweak the station area planning that was done. He added that we may need to even further upgrade or change it.

The next amendment Mr. Troxel reported on was the proposal to amend policies to allow rezones of single-family zones to more dense single-family designations. He reported that DPD's recommendation is to not pursue this change request.

The next proposed amendment is to facilitate the Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall replacement and Waterfront Concept plan. Mr. Troxel added that these plans could include a reroute of Hwy 99 to lessen the severity of the curve near the Colman Dock as well as construction activities, temporary uses, and staging in the waterfront area. Commissioner Sheridan asked what changes related to the Comp Plan are being proposed in order to straighten out the Colman curve. Mr. Troxel answered that it would require some additional fill which would include moving the seawall into Elliott Bay. Commissioner Sheridan asked how this amendment, and the proposed amendment regarding the ferry terminal upgrade, relate to the shoreline update that will start in the next year or so. Mr. Troxel replied that, as of now, it is part of the environmental critical areas review.

Vice-Chair Finrow pointed out that it would be very useful to see the actual language that is being proposed for these Comp Plan amendment proposals. Chair Sheehy asked what the City's date was for amendment adoption. Mr. Troxel replied that they would need to have changes to Council by August 1. Chair Sheehy noted that that would mean that the amendments would be on the Council agenda some time in the fall and that the public advisory vote on the Viaduct is November 6. He noted that this may create an awkward timing of the two processes.

Mr. Troxel moved on to discuss the proposed amendment that would amend the goals and policies to permit the Colman Dock Ferry Terminal to be upgraded - to increase its capacity and allow for future commercial development. Commissioner Kaplan questioned why this is a single amendment proposal and not two. Mr. Troxel responded that the applicant, Washington State Ferries, submitted the request combined – seeing the two aspects of the project as interrelated. Commissioner Kaplan responded that it seems that one may be necessary and the other is a different issue. Commissioner Sheridan noted that she felt that there was a third issue dealing with height as you could have retail development without the height. Vice-Chair Finrow asked if the amendment could be split into two parts. He added that there might be a lot of opposition to the commercial development and Washington State Ferries would not want the upgrade of the terminal to go down with their proposal for the commercial side of it. Vice-Chair Finrow continued that dividing the proposal in two also makes for a cleaner argument and discussion, a cleaner public discussion. Ms. Wilson noted that when the Seattle Planning Commission submits its comments we can make a case for this.

Commissioner Hilda Blanco asked why this was not part of the Waterfront plan. Commissioner Sheridan replied that it was and that there was a lot going on that was all part of the Waterfront plan. Commissioner Blanco noted that you cannot consider the height of this proposal without looking at the overall Waterfront plan. Chair Sheehy noted that is the Seattle Planning Commission's responsibility - that it is our charge to look at the overall plans and see how they relate. Mr. Troxel added that the Waterfront plan includes the Colman Dock and its potential future development as an issue. He added that the proposed Comp Plan changes was just enabling future planning to continue.

Chair Sheehy stated that reviewing Comp Plan amendments is a fundamental responsibility of the Planning Commission. He added that no one in the process, other than the Commission, is specifically charged with the responsibility of looking at the application, comparing it to whatever Comp Plan policies apply and providing analysis to Council.

Mr. Troxel proceeded with the next proposed amendment which would allow contract rezones to non-industrial categories without further Comp Plan amendments for sites of 10 acres or more inside and near the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center boundary. He stated that DPD's proposal is to defer this proposal until 2007 in order to further study it and to allow the proposer to develop their idea of what they want to do.

Mr. Troxel continued with the next amendment which proposes to exempt a portion of the Duwamish MIC from limits on commercial space. Chair Sheehy asked who the applicant was and suggested that it would be helpful to not only have maps but also the applicants identified for every proposed amendment as well. Mr. Troxel indicated that the applicant is Nitze-Stagen.

The next amendment was related to the South Downtown Plan, in particular re-designating the industrial land in the eastern portion of the International District to mixed-use. Mr. Troxel reported that DPD's proposal is to review the Goodwill site further and consider it as an amendment in 2006 while reconsidering the WOSCA site and Frye properties as potential Comp Plan amendments in 2007. Vice-Chair Finrow asked what is going on with those two properties, what is being considered? Mr. Troxel replied that Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers will have an opportunity to better answer this question later in the meeting during their presentation of the South Downtown project.

Mr. Troxel went on to the next amendment which would change the designations of two small parcels south of the Magnolia Bridge in Interbay (outside of BINMIC) to allow for a proposed land swap between the City and the Port of Seattle on the Future Land Use Map. He noted that the Port would give some waterfront acreage to the City to be used as a park in exchange for some existing, upland park land that the Port could then developed as a mixed use development. Chair Sheehy asked if this was the Port's proposal to which Mr. Troxel replied that it was. Vice-Chair Finrow suggested that the Commission also might want to review the Magnolia Bridge planning in the near future due to the recent announcement of a preferred alternative for its replacement.

Commissioner Fiori asked when the proposed land use changes for North Bay will come up. Mr. Troxel stated that he did not know that but would find out. Vice-Chair Finrow asked that Ms. Wilson send an email with that information.

Mr. Troxel finished up with the last proposed amendment would amend the Roosevelt neighborhood plan to reflect the outcome of station area planning being done in that neighborhood.

Chair Sheehy asked for a reminder of the process and what has been decided to date. Mr. Troxel indicated that the threshold legislation would go to Council very soon, that there is a public hearing on April 12th, Council would make their decision at the subsequent Urban Development and Planning Committee meeting and direct the DPD to proceed. He continued that DPD would have analysis and further recommendations of the amendments to Council by August 1 and then the review would be in City Council hands with an expected decision in September or October. Ms. Herzfeld stated that the Council's goal would be to finish by September.

Chair Sheehy noted that the first action for the Council is the threshold determination. He suggested that the Planning Commission should discuss this further at the April 4th Executive Committee and listen in on the April 12th testimony. He asked if people would provide, via email, their thoughts for the Executive Committee to consider on April 4th in order to have a letter to UDP by their April 12th meeting.

Chair Sheehy thanked Mr. Troxel.

- **Briefing – Livable South Downtown**
 - **Introduction by Mimi Sheridan, SPC rep to the South Downtown Advisory Group**
 - **Susan McLain & Gordon Clowers, Department of Planning and Development**

Commissioner Sheridan reported that an advisory committee was set up by the Mayor to look at South Downtown zoning and urban design issues. She noted that they have met 9 times and that she represented the SPC. Most of the other members were either community people or property owners. Commissioner Sheridan noted that there were good discussions and that the staff has developed a report with preliminary recommendations.

Chair Sheehy invited Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers of DPD to share their report. Susan McLain noted that they started in early 2004 when the Mayor asked them to look at issues of increasing the residential population in South Downtown. She pointed out the areas on the map that made up the boundaries of the study area.

Ms. McLain reported on the public involvement process noting that they had an open house in September in the Chinatown Community Center which was attended by over 100 people. She added that there was another open house on March 15 to present and discuss the phase one staff report. She continued that, at this point, DPD staff's preliminary recommendations set forth some broad directions that they are thinking about and throughout the rest of this year DPD will study these issues in detail with the purpose of putting forward some land use and zoning recommendations to the City Council in early 2007.

Ms. McLain reported that the next big work item will be the EIS. She added that their intention is to begin scoping next month and then begin the EIS process. Gordon Clowers provided more detail on the EIS expectations. He stated that for this particular project they still have some flexibility on what level of detail they go into. He added that there are likely to be some well developed conceptual plans for some of these sites. He continued that they will have the chance to note those in the alternatives and study them to the level that is possible at this time. Mr. Clowers stated that this will provide a lot of the coverage of SEPA review that will be necessary for big projects when they subsequently come in for their project Master Use Permit (MUP). There could be some other SEPA review that is necessary at the time of the MUP. Mr. Clowers noted that it is a good opportunity as there are so many complex transportation issues on Royal Brougham and around the stadiums. He added that on a more basic

level they can report on whether the electric, water, and sewer systems in these areas have the capacity to serve future development.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements recused himself from the discussion and left the meeting.

Commissioner Sheridan asked if they are planning on looking at the sewer system in Pioneer Square. Mr. Clowers replied that they would and that they are aware that the system is challenged. Ms. McLain added that Pioneer Square's aging infrastructure presents some opportunities. She added that Steve Moddemeyer is working with the DPD team on developing sustainability initiatives for the planning area and one of the potential opportunities is to look at ways of diverting storm water and using green buildings to address some of the infrastructure needs. Ms. McLain continued that they will be doing analysis of potential investments place in Pioneer Square and then looking at where the City can augment those dollars. Mr. Clowers added that some of the funds for these improvements will come from City Light and SPU. He continued that it could be that they end up with a much more sensible solution, more cost effective and more environmentally friendly.

Susan McLain described the preliminary recommendations. She stated that, in general, staff has tried to focus housing to compliment the central areas of Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District and the Little Saigon business district. Ms. McLain noted that what they are looking for, in terms of housing density, would be for infill development in Pioneer Square - possibly allowing some additional heights in some situations, and then residential development of the north portion of the North Lot.

Ms. McLain stated that another area proposed for housing is along Fourth and Fifth avenues. She noted they are preliminarily recommending additional height in that area for buildings that are residentially dominated with ground floor retail. Ms. McLain continued that they are looking at housing in the central portion of Little Saigon with some additional height in that area as well. She added that in the southern portion of Chinatown/ID they are looking at some additional height but they really need to engage the community in more discussion. She continued by mentioning the potential of the WOSCA site as a location for housing.

Ms. McLain reported that DPD has been talking with industrial users and the freight mobility community about the importance of freight connections between the Port and the interstates and the importance of the SR519 project. She added that they are looking at a few areas that are currently industrial zoned as "emerging areas" south of Dearborn and south of the stadiums. She indicated that staff sees a natural progression away from the traditional industrial and warehouse uses towards something else in those areas. Ms. McLain noted that if housing were to be allowed in any of these areas it would have to be accompanied by some amenities as well. She added that one of the things that they have been looking at in the alternatives for an EIS is identifying a high density residential option and a high density commercial option and then comparing and contrasting with what the impacts are on transportation.

Chair Sheehy asked about the status of the County's development process of the stadium North Lot. Ms. McLain replied that they have four interested parties who have responded to the request for qualifications. The County is reviewing those responses and developing their request for proposals. The County will have the ability to condition development on design or other issues.

Chair Sheehy stated that the other part of his question is what they are proposing and whether the restrictions that are included in the RFP are consistent with the current plan and do they anticipate any

change to accommodate whatever the bidders may want to propose. Ms. McLain responded that so far what they have identified is that the existing zoning there is Pioneer Square Mixed and will be subject to review by the Pioneer Square Special Review Board. She added that they have met with the Pioneer Square Historic Review Board twice. She continued that so far it sounds as though the proposals are in keeping with what the Pioneer Square community wants for the site. She noted that community consensus is they really want housing on the North Lot. Mr. Clowers added that he believed that King County would be assuming that developers would work within the bounds of the current zoning. Ms. McLain stated that they are recommending that Pioneer Square Mixed zoning remain but look at additional height. Commissioner Sheridan noted that it seems like the community seems generally supportive of that.

Commissioner Blanco asked if it is really necessary to increase heights so much to provide incentives to gain housing. Ms. McLain asked if there are specific areas she is referring to. Commissioner Blanco stated that it was the WOSCA site. Ms. McLain noted that one of the goals of the neighborhood plan was the economic incentivizing in this area, but that is not the only reason to increase height. She added that on the WOSCA site, staff has preliminarily proposed raising the height limit to 160 feet in the northern portion for residentially-oriented uses and then possibly 120 to 125 feet in the remainder of the site. Ms. McLain noted that staff is undertaking an economic analysis to look at whether or not raising height limits is necessary and whether it is desirable. Ms. McLain stated that one of the things that they are researching is how much capacity the proposed changes add and what it does to the economy of what is already there.

Commissioner Blanco asked if they have thought of using bonuses instead. Ms. McLain replied that their intention is to not increase any development capacity or height without a bonus or similar program that is going to contribute to housing, street level amenities, open space, or arts and culture. Commissioner Sheridan added that they are not yet sure if it is specifically a bonus program or some other method. She added that the committee was really clear that although these are pretty large height increases they would only happen if there were pretty substantial contributions in terms of affordable housing, open space, amenities, and sustainability. Commissioner Sheridan noted that these height proposals were to be considered maximums. Ms. McLain pointed out that throughout the report they have tried to include some of the discussion of what the trade-offs might be. She noted that there are several discreet types of work that they need to tackle. One of these is to develop a comprehensive housing strategy for South Downtown. Commissioner Blanco stated that it might have been strategic in how they have worded some of their proposals in the report but some of it is not clear and she suggests that they to fix that. Ms. McLain replied that was good feedback. Commissioner Sheridan noted that in the open house that most of the comments were on heights.

Commissioner Blanco stated that another issue is the plans for the Waterfront and the fact that they are proposing relatively high density so close to part of the waterfront. . Commissioner Sheridan added that one of the issues of concern is allowing housing adjacent to Terminal 46. She added that this is an issue that is not resolved and won't be for some time.

Commissioner Sheridan noted that the WOSCA site is being discussed as a staging area for the Viaduct project and, at one point, was being discussed for a Ferry holding area. Mr. Clowers added that even a slice of it could be needed for the tunnel – if not the whole property. Chair Sheehy asked what the relationship was between this planning effort and the Comp Plan amendment for the WOSCA site. Ms. McLain replied that the WOSCA and the Frye properties were actually proposed for a Comp Plan amendment last year and she is not sure why they were deferred until this year. It has been recommended that the proposed amendment covering these two properties be deferred again, until

2007, in order for the South Downtown planning to be completed before decisions are made about specific properties.

Chair Sheehy asked what the finished product of this effort will be. Mr. Clowers replied that it will include Comp Plan amendments presumably to move some areas (that aren't already included) into the Downtown Urban Center. He also stated that the end product would be the completion of the study, the environmental review process, Comp Plan amendments, and then area rezones. Ms. McLain added that it would also include urban design work.

Chair Sheehy asked at what point we will know for sure what the City's position is on what it wants to happen in this area. Ms. McLain responded that when the Mayor transmits his decision to Council then we will really know what the Mayor's decision is. City Council will go through its own process and full Council will vote and approves the proposals before it is signed by the Mayor.

Chair Sheehy added that he continues to struggle with the Center City Strategy and what legal impact an adopted strategy has on planning and development. Chair Sheehy noted that underlying this is the strong recommendation from the Seattle Planning Commission that before you make any changes to the industrial areas that there ought to be an industrial strategy in place. Chair Sheehy stated that it seemed to him that if the Mayor and the Council adopt this strategy for downtown then that is a recommendation about what to do with the Comp Plan. Ms. McLain stated that the Comp Plan amendments will need to precede the proposal but staff needs to work out the details and the timeframe before the Mayor will recommend any zoning changes in the Comp Plan.

Commissioner Sheridan suggested writing up a schedule with timelines as to what the process is to clarify it. She added that ideally the City would do an industrial strategy that would then be incorporated into Comp Plan amendments.

Vice-Chair Finrow stated that one thing that would be useful to the Planning Commission would be if staff working on the South Downtown project was to recommend that the industrial lands work be accelerated so that input on the impact to industrial land availability is part of their project.

Chair Sheehy thanked Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers for their presentation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment or questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 9:00 am.