



# City of Seattle

## Seattle Planning Commission

Linda Amato, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION OCTOBER 9, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

#### **COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Chair Linda Amato, Vice Chair Chris Fiori, Josh Brower, Colie Hough-Beck, Amalia Leighton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller

#### **COMMISSION STAFF**

Barbara Wilson-Director, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Assistant, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Cheryl Sizov-Senior Urban Planner, Lee Roberts-Intern

#### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Tony To

#### **Guests**

Michelle Zeidman, Ray Gastil, Jim Holmes - DPD

*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**

Chair Linda Amato called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

#### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

##### ▪ **Chair's Report**

Chair Amato noted the upcoming commission meetings. She indicated next Tuesday, October 14 will be the Executive Committee meeting; the LUT Committee will meet the following Thursday, October 16; the next full commission meeting will be held on Thursday, October 23; and the next HNUC committee meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 12. Chair Amato requested that the Commissioners note the date change due to the Veterans Day holiday. Chair Amato continued that next week is the APA regional conference in Spokane.

#### **DISCUSSION**

##### ▪ **Dravus Rezone**

Chair Amato asked for disclosures & recusals on the matter.

**Recusal & Disclosure:**

- **Commissioner Tom Eanes recused himself from all Commission discussion and action in this matter.**
- **Commissioner Martin H. Kaplan disclosed that he is a member of the Queen Anne Community Council and Land Use Review Committee and has reviewed the project as a Queen Anne resident many times.**
- **Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that her firm, SvR Design Company, has a contract with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). She adds that in March 2008, SPU hired SvR to review the Department of Planning and Developments SEPA Checklist and identify information needed to estimate the storm water and wastewater capacity requirements of the proposed rezone.**
- **Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, works with clients that own industrially zoned land.**

Ms. Wilson updated the Commission about the Dravus Rezone. She noted that back in July the Commission sent a letter to Council with recommendations about the proposed rezone at Dravus in the Interbay area. Ms. Wilson indicated that the letter had specific conditions for increasing development potential in areas outside of urban centers and villages. “At a minimum, the following standards should be considered:

- The area is in close proximity to a transit hub or transit priority corridor;
- There is sufficient neighborhood support for the project;
- Important public amenities, such as a sufficient supply of open space, already exist, are adjacent to, or are planning and funded for the area;
- There is an agreement by the developer to make infrastructure improvements necessary to handle higher density through a Local Improvement District (LID) or other arrangement that is agreeable to the City, and;
- The development achieves a higher public purpose such as creating and emphasizing residential development that is affordable to a mix of income levels.”

She noted that the HNUC committee discussed recent changes to the proposed rezone as approved by the Planning Land Use and raised the concern that the proposal is not in line with the Urban Village Strategy as laid out in the comprehensive plan. The PLNUC Committee voted 3-0 in favor of a revised version of the rezone that does not include a LID, raises the base height from 40’ to 65’, which would significantly impact the amount of public benefit obtained by the incentive zoning package. Ms. Wilson noted that Councilmember Conlin also made a companion proposal to change the Future Land Use Map to rezone adjacent industrial zoned land to commercial. She added that since there is not much time on today’s agenda they could briefly discuss a response by the Commission to Council and then authorize the Executive Committee to finalize a letter to Council raising the Commission’s concerns about the revised proposed rezone.

Commissioner Josh Brower shared that he is stunned by Council’s actions. He expressed that he thought that the main reasons that the Commission considered rezones have been eliminated. Commissioner Brower expressed his dismay about the process by which Council changed the proposal.

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori indicated that he would like to get more information and analyze the issue a bit further before writing a letter to Council.

Commissioner Leslie Miller noted that the issue was discussed at length in the HNUC Committee. She added that she might be one of the most critical commissioners about this proposal because it goes against the urban village strategy and even with the LID, the City would still have to maintain the infrastructure. Commissioner Brower agreed. He also stated he was fine with giving the Commissions Executive committee, but he stipulated that he is not willing to allow the Executive Committee to agree with the rezone as revised. If that were the outcome he would propose it come back to the full commission. He reiterated that this is a wholesale revision of the proposal.

Chair Amato stated that she thinks there is not any more information available. She suggested the Commission could still write a letter withdrawing support because it is not the same proposal the Commission initially supported. The Commissioners discussed when Council was likely to vote on this issue and confirmed that it would be best to act promptly with a letter that would be sent out early next week. Ms. Wilson indicated that Councilmember Clark suggests that it is worthwhile for the Commission to provide their input. Chair Amato confirmed that the language of the letter needs to be more fully discussed at the Executive Committee.

**ACTION: Commissioner Josh Brower moved to give the Executive Committee the authority to approve a strongly worded letter to Council that retracts the Commission's approval of the Dravus Rezone. Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded the motion. Vice-Chair Fiori proposed to amend the motion in order to make sure the Commission has all the necessary information before writing the letter. The motion was unanimously approved as amended.**

## COMMISSION BUSINESS

### ▪ Minutes approval

Commissioner McDonald suggested that the discussion about the roundtable meeting on pages 1 and 2 be clarified to indicate that it is part of the Commission's Seattle's Transit Communities project.

**ACTION: Commissioner Kevin McDonald moved to approve the September 25, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Josh Brower seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.**

Ms. Wilson encouraged Commissioners who are interested in the Viaduct and Seawall replacement to attend the meeting on Tuesday, October 14, where there will be a presentation from the tri-agency staff. She noted that the Commission has appointed an Ad Hoc committee that will also discuss the topic at that time.

## **DISCUSSION**

- **South Lake Union**
  - Presentation & discussion about the South Lake Union Urban Forum Study, Jim Holmes, DPD

Chair Amato introduced Jim Holmes, a senior planner with DPD. She noted that the Commission would not take any action today and called for disclosures and recusals.

### **Recusal & Disclosure:**

- **Vice Chair Fiori disclosed that his firm, Heartland, works with several clients in the area including City Light, SDOT, and Antioch University.**
- **Commissioner Hough-Beck disclosed that she lives and works in the area, and that she is on the Mercer Corridor Team.**

Mr. Holmes summarized the major changes related to zoning in the South Lake Union neighborhood. He noted that the area was designated a Hub Urban Village in 2004. Since that time, the City has been working to update the area's neighborhood plan in accordance with the King County Countywide Planning Policies and new targets for jobs and households. There have been many public meetings to identify a list of public benefits the neighborhood would like to see. Currently, DPD is in the second phase of the process that focuses on the EIS work. Two open houses were held in January and February of this year, which identified three strategies zoning strategies that would accommodate increased growth. The City also worked with South Lake Union Friends and Neighbors (SLUFAN), the neighborhood steward group, to recommend alternatives that should be studied in the EIS process. DPD has subsequently identified three urban form scenarios that will be studied; a focus group will meet next month to refine these prior to the DEIS. Mr. Holmes noted that the final recommendations will likely include a combination of these alternatives. He expects the draft EIS to be released sometime next spring. The [three alternatives](#) illustrate a spectrum of height and density.

Mr. Holmes walked through the alternatives described in the attached document and noted that Alternative 1 most closely illustrates SLUFAN's recommendations and also provides for the most height and density. He noted that the base height for the alternatives would remain the same and that higher heights and increased density would be allowed through incentive zoning. Mr. Holmes walked through the highlights of the three alternatives.

Chair Amato asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Hough-Beck noted that South Lake Union Park is really valuable part of the neighborhood and that density should probably be focused in the transportation hubs and corridors. Mr. Holmes noted that the lakefront is an area of special consideration and that people have differing opinions about the area.

Vice Chair Fiori noted that 85 foot podiums would create a form similar to what is currently allowed and is quite massive. Commissioner Brower agreed and noted that 85 foot podium heights do not help create walkable, livable neighborhoods. Mr. Holmes noted that the City is evaluating a range of

podium heights. Vice Chair Fiori further stated that people might not perceive the height difference in 125-200 foot towers as much if there are more setbacks; Chair Amato agreed.

Commissioner McDonald inquired about the location of the streetcar route and noted there did not seem to be a corresponding corridor with higher proposed density. Mr. Holmes confirmed that Alternative 1, the 'transit corridors and nodes' option does not specifically focus around the streetcar as a corridor. Michelle Zeidman asked about how the bus lines correspond with the corridors; Mr. Holmes confirmed that the existing transit informs what DPD will evaluate.

Chair Amato asked about the timeline for the project. Mr. Holmes stated that DPD will host a scoping meeting in November; will take about a year to complete the EIS; and expects legislation will go to Council in maybe the first or second quarter of 2010.

Commissioner Leighton asked about where townhouses might be encouraged at street level. Mr. Holmes indicated that both alternatives 1 and 2 would allow for townhouses in the 20'/400' commercial/residential zones. Commissioner Leighton suggested that the area could be expanded, particularly to accommodate views to the west if/when connections across Aurora Avenue are improved.

Commissioner Hough-Beck noted that while this study evaluates height and density, it seems to exclude open space. Mr. Holmes concurred and noted that while this study cannot evaluate everything, increased open space would be part of the incentive zoning package and would be studied in greater detail as that is prepared.

Vice Chair Fiori asked about the household capacity of the different alternatives; Mr. Holmes noted that there would be varying capacities under the different alternatives and that overall they do represent substantial increases in density. Vice Chair Fiori then asked how that might change Comprehensive Plan growth targets. Mr. Holmes indicated that the targets could indeed change, but that would not be part of this process.

Commissioner Leighton asked about which properties have recently been redeveloped and therefore not likely to change again with the new zoning. Mr. Holmes indicated some of the numerous parcels that have recently been redeveloped and noted that he will bring a map illustrating these properties the next time he presents to the Commission. [Please click [here](#) to view a map of recently completed and proposed projects.]

Ms. Wilson asked when would be the key decision points that would be best for the Planning Commission to weigh in on. Mr. Holmes indicated that the scoping meeting in November would be helpful and that the Lake Union Opportunity Alliance will offer their perspective on the alternatives toward the end of December. He also noted that the draft EIS will provide an important time to look at the alternatives, particularly related to transportation and view impacts, and also to recommend a preferred alternative to be studied for the final EIS; there will also be another opportunity for input after the final EIS.

Chair Amato confirmed that there were no further questions and thanked Mr. Holmes for his time.

- **Planning Director Update**

- Discussion about the Neighborhood Plan update process, Ray Gastil, DPD

Chair Amato welcomed Mr. Gastil. Those who had not yet met Mr. Gastil briefly introduced themselves. Chair Amato stated that the Commission is glad to have him here.

Mr. Gastil noted that he would like to focus today's discussion on the Neighborhood Plan Updates. He quickly summarized the composition of the NPAC and noted that on September 22, Council lifted provisos and identified the first neighborhood plans that would be updated, which are all in station areas – Othello, Mt Baker and Beacon Hill. He also noted that all 38 neighborhoods would receive status reports, although the exact format and data have yet to be determined. Mr. Gastil confirmed that DPD is coordinating with DON for this work. He stated that the second of neighborhoods have not yet been identified, but that some areas such as Northgate and South Lake Union have recently been the focus of major planning efforts and would not be likely candidates for near-term updates as part of this process. He stated that some informal outreach has already begun in places like Mt. Baker and that there would be a pancake breakfast at Beacon Hill in the near future.

Mr. Gastil told the Commission that while it has yet to be formally announced, Lyle Bicknell of City Design has been selected as the Neighborhood Plan Manager. He noted that Lyle has been directly involved with many neighborhood and station area planning efforts, including urban design guidelines, that he has experience in all levels of urban design, and a strong report with community groups. Mr. Gastil confirmed that an interdepartmental team will be involved in the neighborhood plan updates and that there is also funding for consultant resources, specifically in terms of outreach and visioning. He stated that the City is committed to reaching a broad spectrum of the community in the outreach process and that national experts are being considered.

Mr. Gastil indicated that the process is beginning with informal outreach, which will be followed by kick-off meetings and goal setting so that recommendations can be made by the end of 2009. He also indicated that they want to coordinate as much as possible with existing work so that people do not get overwhelmed by meetings. Mr. Gastil invited Commissioners to attend the Beacon Hill Pancake Breakfast at El Centro de la Raza on October 18 from 9:30 until 1:00, which will focus on encouraging walkable development around the new light rail station.

Chair Amato thanked Mr. Gastil and asked for questions.

Commissioner Miller noted that the Southeast and Greater Duwamish District Councils will host a South End Station Area Planning Forum, on October 25 from 12 until 1:30 at the New Holly Gathering Hall. Louise Grasso, of Gehl Architects in Copenhagen, will be on hand to help community members envision what their station areas could become.

Commissioner Miller also asked about the staffing resources and how all the departments would work together. Mr. Gastil confirmed that DON has 1 FTE funded and that the team would be co-located, including staff from SDOT, Parks and others. He also noted that they are still working on how the team will work together and that it will be a very important of the process. He also noted that the NPAC is still forming.

Ms. Wilson noted that Commissioners Brower and Knapton will represent the Commission.

Mr. Gastil stated that he would be interested in meeting with the Commissioners who live and work in the southeast area to get their perspectives on the initial neighborhood plan updates; he and Ms. Wilson will follow up about that. Chair Amato noted that four or five Commissioners live in that area; Ms. Wilson confirmed that Commissioners Miller and To both have a lot of experience with the Southeast District Council.

Ms. Sizov asked about how the neighborhood plan updates will be coordinated with other City efforts, such as the Southeast Action Agenda. Mr. Gastil noted that it does present an interesting challenge, particularly related to the edges around urban village boundaries. Chair Amato that previous planning efforts proposed to look at neighborhoods in a sector approach to address some of the issues that Ms. Sizov brought up, but that it was not well received. Mr. Gastil agreed that the first three neighborhoods are a unique group and that the second round will need to be addressed in the future.

Chair Amato thanked Mr. Gastil for his time.

- **Seattle's Transit Communities**
  - General project overview, Ms. Wilson
  - Draft Questionnaire results summary, Mr. Roberts & Ms. Sheehy
  - Draft agenda outline, Ms. Sizov

Chair Amato moved on to the next item on the agenda – Seattle's Transit Communities.

Ms. Wilson provided a general overview of 'Seattle's Transit Communities—integrating land use and public amenities with transit.' She noted that this was identified as one of the Commission's top priorities during the retreat – to help City officials make good decisions about how to integrate decisions about land use with transit investments. She noted that this work takes a comprehensive look at the issues and will hopefully guide decision makers. The project will look at all transit modes, not just light rail, and evaluate best practices for land use, density and amenities around transit corridors and hubs.

Ms. Wilson indicated that a questionnaire has been sent out to city staff and the Commission's LUT committee is in the process of planning for a roundtable discussion with city officials and decision makers as well as representatives of other key partner agencies. She stated the roundtable would be internally focused, rather than addressing the public or stakeholders. Ms. Sizov indicated that the roundtable is tentatively planned as a long lunch hour. Ms. Wilson noted that the discussion will likely include about 40 people.

Ms. Wilson went on to state that the Commission expects to release a report, similar to the Affordable Housing Action Agenda or the incentive zoning white paper, in early 2009. She noted that there has been lots of interest in the project thus far. The roundtable will explore what might work in Seattle.

Ms. Sizov asked the Commissioners to pass along their thoughts. She also reminded the Commission that the point of the questionnaire was to get a sense of what people see as the

challenges and opportunities & challenges in Seattle. She asked Commissioners to keep in mind how we might use these results to shape the discussion at the roundtable.

Mr. Roberts and Ms. Sheehy summarized the draft questionnaire result; please see the attached powerpoint or pdf for more information.

Commissioner Leighton expressed concern about the need for more public education about these issues.

Chair Amato clarified that the Amtrak routes are considered 'intercity passenger rail' and that heavy rail refers to subway systems.

Commissioner Miller made an editorial note that while she likes the tagline, the phrase "Seattle's Transit Communities" takes the emphasis off communities and sounds more like an interest group. Ms. Wilson noted that the name is also just a draft and there is still time to change it. She asked that Commissioners send staff their thoughts on the project title.

Ms. Sizov quickly reviewed the DRAFT agenda; she also had three main questions for the commissioners:

1. How can we make best practices work in Seattle;
2. What are the opportunities and challenges; and
3. How can the Commission best support and facilitate others work.

She asked the commissioners to discuss whether or not these questions are too broad given the questionnaire results. She also emphasized that we are trying to stay at the ten thousand foot level and do not want to focus solely on light rail.

Commissioner McDonald indicated that dropping the acronyms (TOD, SAP) could help point people in direction. Ms. Wilson noted that they were dropped from the questionnaire and that staff would do the same with the agenda. Commissioners made other suggestions about refining the agenda.

Commissioner Miller noted that it seems like one of the biggest challenges for everyone is the huge disparity of education about density and transportation. She asked if how the Commission could address this issue given that a lot of people in the city have trouble standing up to non-progressive ideas.

Commissioner Hough-Beck indicated she would like the questions to start a process of realistic visioning about the bigger goals rather than focus on assets and challenges.

Vice Chair Fiori asked what do we really want to get out of the meeting; what are the key questions that the Commission wants answers to? Ms. Wilson stated that staff has been working with Commissioners McDonald and Kaplan to define the project goals. She further stated the most important outcome from the roundtable would be clarification about how the Commission could provide the most helpful independent and objective advice to decision makers. Ms. Sheehy suggested that perhaps the questions could focus on articulating a clear vision for transit communities and how to improve public education and outreach to help implement that vision.



Commissioner Leighton suggested that rather than summarizing the projects in the Seattle area the roundtable might focus on what is *not* already policy and how the Commission might help them reach their visions locally.

Chair Amato suggested that perhaps two roundtables would be more helpful. Ms. Wilson and Ms. Sizov agreed that there is an urgency to the project and that we need to focus on moving the project forward. Commissioner Brower concurred and reiterated that it will be important to learn how the Commission can add value. Vice Chair Fiori suggested that it might be helpful to have ideas for people to react to at the roundtable rather than just asking open ended questions.

Ms. Wilson noted that the LUT committee would revise the roundtable agenda based on today's input.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:35.