



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 8, 2005 Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance: Steve Sheehy – Chair, Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Mimi Sheridan.

Commissioners Absent: Mahlon Clements, John Owen, Tony To.

Commission Staff: Barbara Wilson – Director, Scott Dvorak – Planning Analyst

Guests: Jeff Thompson – Interbay Neighborhood Association; Claudia Arana – Boards & Commissions Administrator/Mayor's Office; John Rahaim – Director of City Planning/DPD; Susan Sanchez – Director of Planning, Policy and Major Projects/SDOT

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Chair Steve Sheehy.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Approval of Agenda

Chair Sheehy asked Commissioners to review agenda and suggest changes. He suggested that since we had a guest in the audience we could move the Public Comment period to the beginning of the meeting.

Approval of July 28, 2005 Minutes

ACTION: Vice Chair Finrow moves that the minutes be approved. Commissioner Sheridan seconds the approval. A typo in the minutes is noted. The motion to approve passes unanimously with typo correction.

Commissioner Sheridan noted that our July 28 meeting discussion included reference to downtown livability issues and the request by Councilmember Steinbrueck to work on that issue in context of the downtown height and density zoning changes proposal. Commissioner Sheridan wanted to take this opportunity to remind the Commission that it has that work ahead of it this autumn.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Sheehy asked for public comment. Jeff Thompson from the Interbay Neighborhood Association (INA) was given the floor to comment on his group's proposal for the Dravus Street area. Mr. Thompson noted that he is president of the association and an area property owner and that INA has been working on a master plan for the area and is looking for support from City

departments and Commissions. Specifically, he noted that there is a Comp Plan amendment request being reviewed by City Council to designate the area a Hub Urban Village and that INA has withdrawn that request (though it remains as an amendment proposal through the amendment process in 2005). He stated that INA is now interested in having the Dravus area designated as a pilot project for increasing allowed density in areas outside of urban villages but in places that would be the City and neighborhood's advantage to encourage redevelopment. Mr. Thompson provided copies of the proposal to Commissioners as well as information on the history of his groups efforts in the area, including their community outreach to Magnolia and Queen Anne. Chair Sheehy thanked him for his comments.

Chair & Staff Report

▪ Fall and Winter Schedule

Chair Sheehy noted the upcoming meeting and events on the back of the agenda. Particularly noting the following; the HNUC meeting on Tuesday, Sept 13; the Multifamily Focus Group meeting on Wednesday, Sept 14; LUT meeting on Thursday, Sept 15; and the Livable South Downtown Open House on Monday, Sept 19.

Chair Sheehy stated that the Commission's work in the coming months will focus on several pieces of legislation moving their way through City Council - including the Comp Plan amendments, the Downtown Height and Density Changes Zoning proposal, and the Neighborhood Business District Strategy (NBDS) proposal. He noted that it seems likely that Council adoption of the Downtown zoning and NBDS legislation will be deferred to the first quarter of 2006, but that prior to that, there may be additional requests from the Council for Planning Commission review and comment. In addition, he stated that Commissioners Finrow and Blanco have generously offered to provide the Commission with an analysis of the Beasley and Spexman report to City Council (The Vancouver Report). The analysis will be used as a tool by the Commission as a basis for our recommendations to City Council on the Downtown Height and Density Zoning Change Proposal. They hope to have their review completed by mid-December.

Chair Sheehy reported that the UDP committee of the City Council will be holding a public hearing on the Downtown Height and Density Zoning Change proposal on Monday evening. Commissioner discussed whether they should send a Planning Commissioner to give public comment

ACTION: The Commission will send a representative to share the Commission's recommendations on the proposal at this public event as a follow up to our written comments sent directly to the Council. Chair Sheehy volunteered to represent the Commission at the hearing.

Chair Sheehy noted that some other projects the Commission will be working on include the Center City Seattle Strategy, Industrial Lands Roundtable and possible strategy development, detached accessory dwelling units in Southeast Seattle, the Multifamily Code Rewrite project, Northgate Housing study, South Lake Union Urban Center Plan update, South Downtown Advisory Group and eventual policy development, the Monorail project, and the Viaduct Replacement and Waterfront Concept Plan.

- **New Commissioner Recruitment**

Director Barbara Wilson noted that Chris Fiori's term as our Get Engaged Commissioner will be completed at the end of September. Our new candidate, Carl See will join us in October. Chris, however, has been approved by the Mayor's Office to fill Anjali Bhagat's vacated seat. Commissioner Bhagat recently resigned from the Commission with almost a year and a half left in her term. Chris will serve out that term.

Ms. Wilson noted that in addition to Commissioner Bhagat's seat, the Commission has three additional openings in January 2006. Commissioner's Sheridan and Owen will be retiring after 6 years of excellent service to the Commission. The seat vacated by Matthew Kitchen is also available to be filled. The press release will go out tomorrow announcing a call for applications. We will need Commissioners to focus their energies on recruiting excellent candidates to apply, assistance in reviewing applications and participating in the interviews. It was decided that applications should be submitted by mid-October with the goal of getting a list approved by the Mayor and submitted to City Council before the end of the year. The three new Commissioner's terms will begin on January 15th.

- **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Commissioner Sheehy reminded everyone of the Commission's conflict of interest policy. A copy of the Commission's bylaws was available for review. Chair Sheehy added that since the Commission is an advisory body, it is unlikely for Commissioner's to have a direct conflict of interest; however, it is the perception of a conflict which the Commission strives to avoid.

Commissioner Spotlight: Martin Henry Kaplan

Commissioner Martin Henry Kaplan shared his family history and samples of his architectural work.

Project Updates

- **Detached Accessory Dwelling Units**

Commissioner Sheehy gave the following report: Legislation has been developed at DPD and is being reviewed in the Legal and Finance departments. The legislation proposes that DADUs be allowed in Southeast Seattle. It has general public support in that area of the City, the legislation was developed in response to community requests to allow DADUs. Recently, the Southeast District Council voted unanimously to support the legislation.

- **South Downtown Advisory Group**

Commissioner Sheridan reported that most of the meetings to date have been focused on background information/material. The next meeting on Thursday, September 15th will be on zoning.

- **Industrial Lands Study**

Director Wilson pointed out that a draft agenda is in the Commissioner's folders. A date has not yet been selected, but Commissioners have been solicited to weigh in on dates that would work for

them. She noted the Commission will also need to work with others invited to the roundtable to finalize the date.

- **Monorail**

Chair Sheehy recused himself from this portion of the meeting and Vice-Chair Finrow has assumed the chair position for this discussion.

Commissioner Eanes then described the items handed out to Commissioners including draft letters and background material. Vice-Chair Finrow asked if there was a specific timeframe for completing the letter – whether Councilmember Conlin had specifically asked for our review to be completed by a specific date. Director Wilson indicated the Councilmember Conlin had not indicated a specific date, however, the Mayor’s September 15th deadline for SMP is just a few days away and it seems advantageous for the Commission to get our letter out before that date. Commissioner Sheridan noted that a new financing plan was soon to be released and it could include reduction of the contingency fund and if the SPC feels that is already a problem with the project we should say that right upfront in our letter. She suggested that the Commission make it clear that we feel that the size of the contingency fund is already an issue and its reduction would be even more problematic. General discussion about what date would be good to have the letter completed by – it was agreed that it should be completed at submitted by the 12th or 13th of next week – all comments to Director Wilson by Monday, the 12th.

ACTION: Commissioner Sheridan moved that the letter be approved with discussed changes and distributed before September 15. Councilmember Blanco seconded the action. The proposal is approved by unanimous vote with two abstentions (Councilmembers Sheehy and Krizanich).

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Approve Seattle Planning Commission 2005 Comp Plan Amendment Letter

Commissioner Quintana recused himself from discussion of the Dravus proposed amendment.

Commissioner Sheehy asks for comments on current draft of the Commission’s 2005 Comp Plan Amendment letter to City Council. There was some discussion about the Dravus proposed amendment and some wording of a few of the comments. In the end, no changes were made to the current draft.

ACTION: Vice Chair Finrow moved that the Comp Plan letter be adopted. Commissioner Blanco seconded the motion. The letter was approved unanimously with one abstention (Councilmember Quintana).

COMMISSION BRIEFING

DPD City Planning Director's Report – John Rahaim

Joining John Rahaim today is Susan Sanchez; Director of Policy, Planning, and Major Projects at SDOT. Mr. Rahaim explained that Ms. Sanchez represents a group at SDOT that the City Planning group at DPD works very closely with. Mr. Rahaim then provided an overview of current projects:

Downtown Zoning Changes proposal – legislation is in front of City Council now. We spent almost a full day with the Vancouver planners Beasley and Spexman when they were down researching our downtown for their recent report. City Planning staff is looking very closely at their report. On the one hand they are pretty supportive of our proposal. Their key concerns are with the provision of public amenities, specifically what we are asking for developers to provide. In Vancouver, they ask for the developer pro formas and then ask for the developers to pay for public amenities above a “reasonable profit.” That is something we can’t do here in the US. City Council, however, is looking to create a generic pro forma in order to understand the possible value being created by the proposed ordinance. Vancouver has been successful in attracting families downtown. Mayor Nickels has asked that we focus on that issue this coming year. Our question is - how much should be part of this legislation, and how much should part of the Center City Strategy.

Vice Chair Finrow agreed with that question and followed by suggesting that what is needed is a road map to how we get livability downtown. Something that clearly lays out what we want and how we think we can get it – how we can make it happen. Mr. Rahaim indicated that he and the Center City Seattle director, Gary Johnson, are working on something close to that.

Commissioner Sheridan brought up the issue of attracting families and the fact that it is often presented as one of the goals of a livable downtown – but we really need to understand what would attract them.

Commissioner Quintana brought up the issue of remaining competitive in the regional market – cautioning that we can go too far in our requirements from developers. Bellevue is already very competitive with downtown Seattle. Mr. Rahaim agreed that that is a fine line – figuring out what is the right balance between getting developers to pay for community amenities to counter the impacts on the community versus how much is too much which may prevent the development altogether, or encourage it to go somewhere else.

The group then discussed a recent article by Trevor Boddy, a journalist based in Vancouver, about the Vancouver process and, more specifically, how the rush to create a livable downtown has been to the exclusion of a business downtown Vancouver. Vancouver is now taking action to protect office districts from housing conversion.

Chair Sheehy wondered about timely input into the process of the Center City Seattle strategy. Council Central staff and DPD staff are reviewing the Vancouver study. We are also reviewing it. When would be a good time to submit our questions or comments? Mr. Rahaim believes City Council will take up this project in December after the budget – so comments in to them in November seems to be a good idea. The Council has some questions about bulk, height, and the transfer of development credit program – all things that the DPD staff is working on.

As for the Neighborhood Business District Strategy, the Center City work has a higher priority, but things are happening with NBDS. City Council is looking at phasing or breaking the proposal into pieces. DPD staff are concerned by that – we’ve been working with Council to let them know why we think that is not the best approach. If they do break it in to pieces, we hope they simply adopt portions of it, but don’t have them go in to effect until all the pieces are adopted..

At the next meeting, Mr. Rahaim indicated that he would bring more news about the Center City Seattle strategy project, including the work plan for next year. Also, in the next few weeks he is hoping to finalize a communication contract with a consultant.

Commissioner Sheridan brought up the point of families in Center City and pointed out that she questioned whether making the Center City attractive to families may be done to the detriment of investment in other parts of the city the will keep those areas attractive to families (as they are now). If we only have a certain amount of money to be spent on community services/amenities that are attractive to families, is it the best use of that money to spend it in an area to create something out of nothing – or to improve or maintain services already in place elsewhere.

Commissioner Quintana wondered about the demographics of Vancouver. How many families with children are there downtown? Mr. Rahaim indicated that there were large numbers of children living in downtown Vancouver now. Commissioner Quintana said that families will stay downtown until their children turn 4, then they move to the suburbs – to better schools. Mr. Rahaim said that that is one of the issues to look at downtown. Right now there is a good example of a school at Seattle Center – it started small, then grew slowly, one grade at a time. He thinks that might be an interesting model to look at in other parts of the downtown.

SDOT Policy, Planning, and Major Project’s Report – Susan Sanchez

Director Susan Sanchez provided an overview of her group and their work. They were created four years ago under Grace Crunican’s department leadership – work covers all modes of transportation, integrating planning with policy, some element of revenue development, and parking management. A quick rundown of current projects include:

- Seattle Transit Plan – being adopted by City Council this week.
- Transportation Strategic Plan
- Southeast Seattle Transportation Study – looking at all modes of transportation in a geographic area.
- Bicycle Master Plan – will be created next year
- Colman Dock
- Center City Seattle Strategy
- Northgate CTIP – analysis has been completed on existing conditions as well as a gaps analysis and a list of improvements. Staff will present to stakeholders at a community forum on October 20 and will begin scoping for EIS.

Commissioner Blomberg wondered what would trigger the need for an EIS at Northgate. Ms. Sanchez indicated that it was somewhat proactive so that different development could proceed in the area with the knowledge that we have looked at area comprehensively – and not just one project at a time. Developers can join in partnership on the work. Commissioner Sheridan pointed out that many perceive that not much is going on in that area, but in fact there are many projects underway or in the development stage.

Ms. Sanchez then spoke about the Viaduct and all the work her group is doing on that project. They are currently working on a supplemental EIS to be released in mid-January 2006. They are also doing an analysis on construction methods and their impacts on Center City – which will be included in the supplemental EIS.

Her group is also working on the issues surrounding the closure of the Downtown Transit Tunnel on September 24 for two years – as well as, the elimination of the First Hill station on North Link and what other transit options might be available to provide to First Hill.

Vice Chair Finrow asked what happens if funding for the Viaduct replacement is put into question.

Ms. Sanchez indicated that SDOT still had planning money available and that they would need to continue their work – to complete engineering and design work. The need for a replacement isn't going away, so they will forge ahead and deal with whichever option is selected.

Commissioner Kaplan asked about the Transit Tunnel and the reasons it needs to be retrofitted, since in theory it was built with that capacity in the first place.

Ms. Sanchez said that even though it had been built for joint use, systems have changed, stations needed to be fitted to the new system, electrical work needs to be upgraded, staging areas needed to be constructed for truncating the line at Convention Place for several years before North Link is opened.

Chair Sheehy thanked John Rahaim and Susan Sanchez for their reports.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.