



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION APRIL 8, 2010 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Vice Chair – Leslie Miller, Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Christopher Persons Matt Roewe, Amanda Sparr

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Chair – Josh Brower, Martin Kaplan, Kevin McDonald

GUESTS

Marshall Foster, DPD; Peter Hahn, Bob Powers, Tracy Krawczyk, SDOT; Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Seattle City Council

IN ATTENDANCE

Bill Bradburd

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

Vice Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the March 25, 2010 minutes; Commissioner Catherine Benotto seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

- **Chair's Report**

Vice Chair Miller quickly noted the Commission's upcoming meetings including the April 13 Executive Committee meeting, April 15 LUT committee meeting and the next Full Commission meeting on April 22.

- **BRIEFING & DISCUSSION: City Planning Update**

- Marshall Foster, Director

Mr. Foster provided a brief update of the City Planning division's work. He explained that a new subcabinet will be formed to help provide an integrated approach to planning for sustainable communities. Mr. Foster indicated that the neighborhood plan updates currently underway would serve as a pilot for the sustainable communities effort.

Mr. Foster told the Commission a consultant team would soon be hired to complete the South Lake Union EIS and that the final EIS would be expected early next year. He also noted that an ordinance related to adaptive reuse of industrial zoned land was passed by Council two weeks ago.

Mr. Foster explained that City staff is working with City Council and the Seattle Housing Authority to develop a planned action redevelopment strategy for Yesler Terrace. He indicated that this would be the first time that a planned action EIS was utilized in Seattle.

Mr. Foster said that staff is working with the Mayor's Office to finalize an ordinance that would reduce obstacles to permitting street food carts in the right of way. He noted that current regulations basically limit vendors to selling hot dogs, popcorn, coffee and flowers. Mr. Foster is hopeful that the new regulations will allow for more variety in the types of food served as well as an increase in the number of food vendors in Seattle. He explained that following recent changes to the permitting process for sidewalk cafes, the City has seen a 400% increase in applications. He noted that reducing permitting fees makes a big difference to small businesses.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked about a demonstration program that allows neighborhood groups to use the public right of way to grow food. Mr. Foster replied that SDOIT lifted restrictions about planting food in the right of way and noted that Andrea Petzel, in City Planning, is working on increasing opportunities for 'urban agriculture' in the city.

Mr. Foster talked briefly about City Planning's work plan and explained that they are shifting from a one-year work plan to a three-year work plan, which should complement the sustainable communities initiative and encourage a broader, citywide perspective when making policy decisions. Mr. Foster indicated that he would like to work closely with the Commission in developing the work plan and that Councilmember Clark has been very supportive of the new approach.

Commissioner Persons suggested that the planned action EIS strategy underway at Yesler Terrace might be used as a model for the anticipated TOD on Capitol Hill. Mr. Foster replied that it could be an option, but noted that the planned action EIS process has generally been envisioned for larger sites. He noted that City Planning and Sound Transit staff have been working together to create a more proactive partnership around the Capitol Hill light rail station that could be carried over into

development around future light rail stations as well. Mr. Foster explained that a draft proposal from the community could be used to establish clear expectations in the RFP that would be issued for the four sites around the light rail station.

Commissioner Sparr asked about the proposed Chihuly glass museum at Seattle Center. Mr. Foster replied that the proposal is one of several that will be evaluated. Commissioner Sparr suggested that the area could be a great place for food vendors.

▪ **BRIEFING & DISCUSSION: Transportation projects and policy initiatives**

- Peter Hahn, Bob Powers, Tracy Krawczyk, Seattle Department of Transportation

Vice Chair Miller welcomed Mr. Hahn, Mr. Powers and Ms. Krawczyk; the Commissioners briefly introduced themselves. Mr. Hahn briefly outlined his background and experience and said that he has been very pleased thus far with SDOT and the depth of talent throughout the City's departments. He explained that SDOT's work is currently organized around four citywide themes: sustainable, equitable, productive and livable. He acknowledged that funding is a particular challenge in the current economic climate.

Mr. Hahn explained that the Mayor's theme – walk/bike/ride – is consistent with SDOT's major planning efforts that have been underway in recent years with the notable difference that the Mayor would like to implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans more quickly. He indicated that Bridging the Gap will not provide enough money to implement these plans and that another voter-approved funding source might be necessary.

Mr. Hahn spoke briefly about some of the major projects underway including the Viaduct and Seawall Replacement, Mercer East and West, SR520 and the First Hill Streetcar.

Ms. Krawczyk outlined the work plan related to updating the Transportation Strategic Plan and Transit Master Plan. She indicated that one goal would be to be more clear about how the plans help implement the Comprehensive Plan. She explained that the Transit Master Plan would also outline how transit service could be expanded with additional light rail, streetcar and electric trolley bus routes. Mr. Hahn indicated with Councilmember Rasmussen is also interested in upgrading and expanding the bus trolley network and suggested that the potential light rail routes would be local light rail rather than regional like Sound Transit's LINK system. Commissioner Fiori asked about a local light rail system would integrate with LINK given the lack of capacity in the transit tunnel. Mr. Hahn replied that the details of local light rail still need to be resolved.

Commissioner Johnson asked about VMT reduction goals. Mr. Hahn indicated that reductions in per capita VMT will need to be tied to regional transit plans and other actions. Ms. Krawczyk suggested that a shift in federal priorities and funding will ultimately be necessary to reduce per capita VMT at the local and regional levels. She noted that greenhouse gas reduction was not used as a goal of the regional Transportation 2040. Commissioner Johnson said it sounds like SDOT is motivated to reduce VMT but that there is less political will at the regional level. Mr. Hahn agreed that many residents of the suburban jurisdictions feel that roads are still essential for their communities.

Commissioner Roewe noted that the discussion around SR520 seems to dismiss BRT as a viable, long-term high capacity transit solution. Mr. Hahn replied that at one time it might have appeared that BRT was not being discussed as part of the long-term solution, but that ultimately, perhaps in 100 years, it would make sense to have light rail on SR520 and that the Mayor would like to see the bridge designed to accommodate light rail.

Commissioner Persons asked whether or not SDOT is exploring how to provide transit service along 12th Avenue now that Broadway has been identified as the preferred route for streetcar service. Mr. Hahn replied that SDOT is in discussions with Metro about providing service along 12th Avenue; Ms. Krawczyk added that the County Executive is supportive of exploring how to provide transit service along that corridor.

Commissioner Fiori asked about the concept of keeping revenues generated by parking within the neighborhoods. Mr. Hahn said that the Mayor's office is exploring the concept. Ms. Krawczyk indicated that most of the revenue is generated downtown and that different models are being evaluated in order to avoid creating the wrong incentives for neighborhoods. Mr. Hahn also noted that ePark signs will soon be installed downtown to help drivers find places to park, which should help save time and gas.

Commissioner Sparr asked about SDOT and public involvement. Mr. Hahn explained that SDOT frequently relies on public input for everything from specific detour routes to larger planning processes. He said that public involvement is very important to the department.

Commissioner Hough-Beck said that while she really appreciates the direction of Green Streets, she is concerned about maintenance. Mr. Hahn agreed that it is a challenge and indicated that neither SDOT nor the Parks department have proper resources for maintenance. He noted that plans for redevelopment of the central waterfront might include the formation of a public development authority that would be charged with maintenance of the anticipated public space created as part of the replacement of the Viaduct and the Seawall.

Commissioner Knapton suggested that opportunities to create public-private partnerships could be expanded. She noted that when she was working with the West Seattle Junction, the City was very reluctant to establish a partnership with the business district to repair all of the sidewalks even though business owners were willing to make voluntary contributions. She explained that eventually an agreement was reached and the sidewalks were constructed, but that it would be useful for the City to be more open to these types of partnerships. Ms. Krawczyk said that her team continues to explore how to improve opportunities for public-private partnerships.

Commissioner Cutler asked about SDOT's approach to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Mr. Hahn said that the department is trying to make transit easier to use and speed up implementation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian master plans. He also noted that seemingly smaller things, like discouraging idling of parked cars, can cumulatively do a lot to reduce emissions.

Commissioner Fiori asked about the potential of raising revenue through a sales tax that could be used for projects other than roads. Mr. Hahn said that many options to generate funding for transit have been explored by agencies throughout the region but that as long as consumption decreases the amount of revenue generated also continues to decline. Mr. Hahn and Ms. Krawczyk both mentioned that toll roads will likely be necessary.

Ms. Wilson asked how the Planning Commission's independent and objective advice could be most useful. Mr. Powers indicated that providing feedback on SR520, the north and south portals of the deep bore tunnel and the Mercer corridor would all be projects where the Commission's advice would be helpful. Ms. Krawczyk added the Transportation Strategic Plan and Transit Master Plan would also benefit from the Commission's recommendations.

▪ **BRIEFING & DISCUSSION: Council's transportation goals**

- Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Chair, Transportation Committee

Councilmember Rasmussen began by outlining some of the accomplishments as Chair of the Parks and Seattle Center Committee including strengthening services for senior citizens and renewing the parks levy. He suggested that the Commission might want to provide comments about implementing the Seattle Center Master Plan, which does not currently have sufficient funding.

Councilmember Rasmussen noted that as Chair of the Council's Transportation Committee, there are three major projects currently under review: the Viaduct and Seawall Replacement, SR520 and First Hill Streetcar. He indicated that City Council has been working with Governor Gregoire's office to ensure that the design of the west side of SR520 meets Seattle's needs including minimizing impacts on the Arboretum. He indicated that Council would welcome the Commission's comments on the project.

Councilmember Rasmussen went on to say that Peter Hahn has been a breath of fresh air at SDOT and that collaboration between Council and department staff has been welcome. He spoke about the importance of maintaining the appearance and safety of transit corridors, particularly along 3rd Avenue downtown, which is the most heavily traveled transit corridor in the state. He noted that areas around transit stops, particularly around the transit tunnel entrances have not been well maintained and that he has been working to improve the situation.

Councilmember Rasmussen spoke about the opportunities to create an all electric transit system in the city. He indicated that he would work to preserve the electric trolley bus system, which had been disparaged in recent reports as being too expensive for Metro to maintain. He also mentioned recent state legislation, passed last year, which requires vehicle fleets maintained by state and local agencies to use 100% biofuel or electric fuel by 2015.

Ms. Wilson asked how the Planning Commission's independent and objective advice could be most useful. Councilmember Rasmussen indicated that the Commission's advice would be particularly useful on the SR520 bridge replacement. He also suggested that the Commission's recommendations about how to improve quality of life while creating transit oriented developments. He noted that residents of South Lake Union have expressed concern that the neighborhood is starting to look like an office park and suggested that the Commission's advice about how to create welcoming and comfortable neighborhoods while increasing density would be welcome.

Commissioner Hough-Beck noted that, particularly concerning 3rd Avenue, we have plans for 'complete streets' but incomplete maintenance. Councilmember Rasmussen agreed and said that the current parks levy does not include funding for maintenance. He indicated that funding mechanisms,

such as establishing a parks district as in Tacoma, could be explored to generate the funds necessary for maintenance.

Commissioner Roewe expressed support for an expansion of electric transit service and routes and noted that diesel buses have a very negative impact on pedestrian level street activity, such as sidewalk cafes. He noted that more planning will be necessary around light rail stations, particularly at the proposed station along N 145th Street. Councilmember Rasmussen agreed that early planning is something that needs to be addressed.

Councilmember Rasmussen thanked the Commissioners and Ms. Wilson for their work and recognized that serving on the Planning Commission takes a lot of time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Bradburd began by saying that he had emailed Ms. Wilson suggesting that the Commission record its meetings because the public would be interested in listening to their deliberations. He spoke about the City's varied planning efforts and indicated that they should all be based on the urban village strategy of the Comprehensive Plan. He also said that it would be useful for the Planning Commission to make more specific recommendations about the needs of individual urban villages in terms of complete neighborhoods with transit access, shopping, third spaces, parks and open space, etc. Mr. Bradburd suggested that the Commission has the skills to make more specific recommendations and that they would be welcomed by the community. Mr. Bradburd also commented on the location of the Eastlink light rail station along I-90 in between Rainier Avenue South and 23rd Avenue South and said that it should be revisited because the area around the station lacks sufficient density.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Leslie Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:35 pm.