



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

McCaela Daffern and David Goldberg, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, April 27, 2023
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	Mark Braseth, David Goldberg, Alanna Peterson, Lauren Squires
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/meetings>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair McCaela Daffern called the meeting to order at 8:05 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Daffern offered the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, I'd like to humbly recognize that we are gathered on Indigenous land, the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the Duwamish, Suquamish, and Muckleshoot. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities and we respect Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. We commit being better listeners, learners and to lifting indigenous voices. We also commit to identifying racist practices, to practice allyship and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Daffern noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners and staff participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. She asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for volunteers to select one or more of the norms to read aloud. She suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

ACTION: Commissioner Rick Mohler moved to approve the April 13, 2023 meeting minutes. Commissioner Roque Deherrera seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, reviewed the format of the meeting. She noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the meeting or provided in person by members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall. Ms. Murdock stated that full Commission meetings will be recorded and posted to the Planning Commission's website. She noted that these recordings are not in lieu of the Commission's minutes, which are approved at the next full Commission meeting.

Discussion: Seattle Housing Levy Staff Draft Comment Letter

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the staff draft of the Planning Commission's letter on the proposed Seattle Housing Levy. She noted new details about the Mayor's levy proposal that were not available at the time of the last staff presentation and shared some information from the Office of Housing to answer Commissioner questions about cost-per-unit of affordable housing. Ms. Baker reviewed the outline of the staff draft and then Commissioners took five minutes to review the draft individually before moving to discussion.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked to what extent community participation was built into the formation of projects funded by the levy or whether money from the levy is given out to groups to manage funds to build housing in their communities. Ms. Baker noted that there is not a specific levy program that provides funds directly to communities to design and develop affordable housing projects but that many of the projects that are granted funds from the levy are managed by community-based organizations (CBOs) or partnerships between CBOs and affordable housing developers. She also noted that the City manages a separate program called the Equitable Development Initiative which provides funds directly to community organizations for anti-displacement work, which can include housing.
- Commissioners noted that the levy has been successful in providing affordable housing in Seattle but asked how the group can help combat the perception that the levy is not working because the need for affordable housing continues to grow.
- Commissioners asked if the letter should more directly point to the increased allocation for administrative costs in the levy proposal and request additional information as to the main drivers of those cost increases.
- Commissioners noted that a driver of administrative costs might be high development costs such as the permitting process and suggested the letter could recommend reducing City-driven development costs as a means of increasing the impact of the levy.
- Commissioners suggested that the Planning Commission should avoid commenting on the allocation for administration in the levy proposal without full information behind the use of the funds and the cause of the increase. Commissioners noted that they fully support the levy and do not want questions about the allocation of funds to administration to detract from their support.

- Commissioners stated that they would like to see a clearer statement in the letter that supports an even larger levy, one that is right sized to provide more units, develop units of an appropriate type and size to meet the need, and to adequately resource staff to do the work. If costs that are limiting the impact of levy funds are bureaucratically driven, the City should work to reduce those costs.
- Commissioners noted that the goal of the letter should be to support the levy and commit the Planning Commission to help the levy pass. Commissioners discussed what the right strategy should be to support the passage of the levy.
- Commissioners suggested that if the Planning Commission wants to suggest a larger total levy, the letter should include clear reasons to support the increase that detail the need for more units and higher costs. Commissioners suggested setting a goal of at least matching the number of units delivered by the last levy.
- Commissioners noted that there is a need for additional affordable units that are accessible to people with disabilities and that increased accessibility improves access for everyone. Including accommodation for accessibility increases costs and could be noted as a reason to increase the total levy.
- Commissioners debated the risks of increasing the total levy amount given the need for voter approval and the risk of the levy failing if the amount is too high. While the need for more funds is high, Commissioners requested more information on possible voter support for a larger levy.
- Commissioners noted that there are both social and financial costs to not providing affordable housing to those who need it and suggested the letter note those costs as an outcome of an insufficient levy.

Ms. Baker requested that any additional comments or suggestions for the draft letter be sent to her by May 2nd. A revised draft will be discussed at the May 11th Commission meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.