



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Grace Kim, Chair
Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 11, 2016

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Michael Austin, Eileen Canola, Grace Kim, Kara Martin, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Julio Sanchez, David Shelton, Jamie Stroble, Spencer Williams
Commissioners Absent:	Lauren Craig, Sandra Fried, Jake McKinstry, Lauren Squires, Patti Wilma
Commission Staff:	Katy Haima, Policy Analyst; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director
Guests:	Sam Assefa, OPCD; Kathy Nyland, DON
In Attendance:	Cindi Barker

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:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Call to Order

Chair Grace Kim called the meeting to order at 3:08pm. She reminded the Planning Commissioners of upcoming meetings.

OPCD Director Introduction

Sam Assefa, Director, Office of Planning and Community Development

Sam Assefa is the new Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD). In his first visit to the Planning Commission, he introduced himself and asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves. He gave an overview of his career, including time working as an architect and planner in San Francisco, Chicago, and Boulder. Sam described the Mayor's vision for OPCD to work with other City departments and communities to conduct integrated planning in the built environment. Sam's focus in his first several months on the job is to develop a mission for the department that includes how to implement policies, coordinate capital projects with other departments, use a data-driven approach, and view this work through an equity lens. OPCD currently has 49 employees and is structured into a Planning & Implementation and Research & Analysis divisions. Sam stated that the Mayor has empowered OPCD to coordinate with other departments to use data to determine where to plan next, using the Community Planning model.

Sam is looking forward to working closely with the Planning Commission and would welcome their ongoing support in helping the City Council to understand the policy recommendations included in the Comprehensive Plan. He said that implementing the Mayor's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) will require coordination between OPCD, the Department of Neighborhoods, the Office of Housing, Seattle Department of Transportation, and other departments. The Commissioners asked Sam about his initial impressions of OPCD's work on the Comprehensive Plan. He said that he has been impressed by both the content and layout of the document, and emphasized the need for the document to be understandable and meaningful to the general public. He stated that OPCD will be rolling out some controversial projects in the near future, and will need to be very clear with their message and public information materials.

The Commissioners shared their thoughts on various planning topics, including the quality and scale of the pedestrian realm, maintaining a strong relationship with the Department of Construction and Inspections on the design review program, the Comprehensive Plan's Equity Indicators, and the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative trainings. Sam mentioned that he will be participating in the Mayor's new "Capital Cabinet," which will be reviewing capital projects through an inter-departmental approach. The first project to be coordinated through this process will be in the South Park, Duwamish, and Georgetown area of the city. He also identified the One Center City project as an opportunity to work collaboratively with SDOT and other departments to plan for significant disruptions in the public realm. Sam said that he is looking forward to getting to know the various neighborhoods in Seattle and is especially intrigued by planning opportunities at the Seattle Center, the Waterfront, South Park, and Rainier Beach. The Commissioners thanked Sam for his time and encouraged him to come back often.

Minutes Approval

Commissioner Michael Austin moved to adopt the July 28, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Tim Parham seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed. Commissioner David Shelton abstained.

Department of Neighborhoods Community Outreach

Kathy Nyland, Director, Department of Neighborhoods

The Commission was briefed on the Department of Neighborhood (DON)'s emerging community outreach techniques by its Director, Kathy Nyland. The Mayor recently released an Executive Order aimed at looking for ways to broaden public participation, community outreach and engagement citywide. The Department is now in the process of determining how to deploy resources differently than in the past to achieve this goal. Kathy stated "Everyone has a voice; it's our job to hear them."

Kathy described a new citywide approach for reviewing Neighborhood Matching Fund grant applications that is more fair and accessible to all. She also described the Department's commitment to building relationships and partnerships with community-based organizations. She talked about the need to use "People Speak" when communicating complex, technical subjects.

The Commissioners were interested in the creation of a new Community Engagement Council and asked about the potential negative perceptions of a centralized approach compared to the existing neighborhood-based approach. Kathy indicated that the participants in this group will attend training to ensure that they are considering citywide perspectives through an equity/race and social justice lens. Kathy invited the Commissioners to participate in a new Engage Seattle survey and described some of the Department's new communications and outreach techniques, including visiting Seattle Housing Authority events and holding community conversations at the Summer Parkways series.

The Commissioners expressed an interest in learning more about the Department's new community outreach and engagement techniques as they are implemented. Kathy said that DON gets a lot of requests for the City Council and various Boards and Commissions to meet in the community. The Department would be happy to partner with the Planning Commission to engage communities in future meetings.

Report on Meetings with Elected Officials

Vice-Chair Kara Martin reported on recent meetings with Robert Feldstein from the Mayor's office and City Councilmember Rob Johnson, Chair of the Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee. The meeting with Councilmember Johnson included discussion of the Commission's recommended changes to the Comprehensive Plan, upcoming working sessions about urban villages, and flexibility in single-family zones. Commissioner Jamie Stroble reported on the work of the recent HALA focus groups. She commented that the focus groups have been talking almost exclusively about the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) regulations, and the conversations have been very technical. She expressed concern that the focus groups have not allowed enough time for participants to have discussion and provide feedback. The Commissioners commented that they are interested in learning more about the results of the focus groups in the months ahead. The Commissioners also expressed interest in learning more about the ongoing work and results of the Industrial Lands Task Force.

Report on Race and Social Justice Initiative Training

Commissioner Eileen Canola reported on a recent training focused on the application of the City's Race and Social Justice Toolkit. Commissioners expressed concern that use of this toolkit is only applied to review of five projects per year. Planning Commission staff will inquire about upcoming opportunities for all Commissioners to attend this training.

Public Comment

Cindi Barker noted that the HALA website includes all of the focus group minutes, including details of how many focus group members are renters and live inside or outside of the urban villages. She also noted that the focus groups have been talking almost exclusively about the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) regulations and have not had the opportunity to discuss the other HALA recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 pm.