



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Linda Amato, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JANUARY 22, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

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### **COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Chair-Linda Amato, Vice-Chair Chris Fiori, Josh Brower, Colie Hough Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Michelle Zeidman

### **COMMISSION STAFF**

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

### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Tony To

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff

*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 7:30 am.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

#### ▪ Minutes approval

Several Commissioners pointed out some grammatical and typographical errors.

**ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the January 8, 2009 minutes. Commissioner Mark Johnson seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.**

#### ▪ Chair's Report

Chair Linda Amato noted the upcoming meetings: Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, February 3; Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee meeting on Tuesday, February 10; the next Full Commission meeting on Thursday, February 12; and the next Land Use and

Transportation Committee meeting on Thursday, February 19. She added that at the next Executive Committee meeting, the Neighborhood Plan update team will discuss their outreach goals and draft neighborhood status reports. Chair Amato encouraged all Commissioners to attend. She noted that on Thursday, January 29, there will be a public meeting to discuss the proposed Administrative Design Review process for townhouse development from 5:30 until 7:30 p.m. in the Bertha Landis room at City Hall.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson updated the Commissioners regarding the interview process for the vacant positions on the Commission. She noted that seven interviews were conducted on Friday, January 16, and one additional applicant was interviewed earlier in the month. She indicated that any of the interviewees would be great additions to the Commission as there was a strong pool of applicants. Councilmember Sally Clark will appoint two people, and Mayor Nickels will appoint another person, who would then be approved by the full Council. The Commission also will appoint one person, who will then also be subject to Council approval. Ms. Wilson stated that hopefully these new Commissioners will be approved by March.

Commissioner Mark Johnson asked about the process by which the Commission appoints a member. Ms. Wilson indicated that this would be the first time that the Commission will appoint a member. After a brief discussion, the Commission agreed to document the process for future reference.

## **UPDATES & DISCUSSION**

- **Proposed 2009 Comprehensive Plan process**
  - Staff report & discussion (Wilson/Sheehy)
  - Review recommendations for City Council

Ms. Wilson updated the Commission about the proposed changes for the Comprehensive Plan amendment process. She noted that Councilmember Clark has requested the Commission's feedback on her proposal. Ms. Wilson outlined the proposal ([see attached](#)) and reiterated the Commission's main points of concern. While the Commission supports changing the process timeline, other concerns include: Councilmembers submitting amendments late in the process, which limits the Commission's ability to review and provide recommendations; and how new Councilmembers could be brought up-to-speed prior to a final vote only a few months after they take office.

Chair Amato asked if there has been any public outreach about the proposed process change. Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff, replied that Councilmember Clark has contacted everyone who has previously proposed a Comprehensive Plan amendment and the CNC. She added that Councilmember Clark held a meeting in December to discuss the topic with these stakeholders. There was a brief discussion about whether or not proposed amendments would be accepted this year or 2010, which would result in no new amendments being approved until 2011. The Commissioners agreed that it would be preferable to accept applications this year rather than waiting until next year.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan asked if the Growth Management Act requires an annual amendment process. Commissioner Johnson replied that the GMA *limits* comprehensive plan amendments to

once annually; they can be amended less frequently, but not more. He added that the State does establish a schedule for the larger updates.

Commissioner Kaplan thanked Ms. Wilson for drafting the letter. He suggested that people who propose amendments should have an opportunity to either agree or not agree with the changes suggested by DPD. Chair Amato and Ms. Wilson replied that the Commission has discussed this point and agreed that there has to be better transparency. Ms. Wilson noted that the process would not be improved if DPD staff had to meet with proponents to discuss the language of their amendments at every step. She added that, even if the proponent wanted to rescind their proposed amendment, it could still be approved by Council. Chair Amato noted that the Commission previously suggested that the original language, as submitted by the applicant, be included whenever changes are proposed. Commissioner Leslie Miller agreed that this would also be helpful when the Commission reviews the proposed amendments.

Commissioner Miller asked if there has been any discussion about how to improve public understanding of the Comprehensive Plan and the purpose of amendments. Chair Amato suggested that it might be a good topic for this year's retreat. Ms. Wilson noted that this point could be brought up in the Commission's letter. The Commissioners suggested that including a check list that documents how the proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan might be helpful.

Commissioner Colie Hough Beck noted that if this new process is approved, even if notice is sent out next week, there would be less than three and a half months before the deadline for proposed amendment. Ms. Herzfeld replied that Council staff has tried to provide a similar timeframe for the notice of about six or seven weeks. Commissioner Johnson suggested that it might be helpful to provide notice earlier and then accept applications between April 1 and May 15. Commissioner Hough Beck agreed.

▪ **Project Update: Neighborhood Plan Updates**  
- Staff report & discussion (Wilson/Sheehy)

Ms. Wilson reminded the Commissioners that the neighborhood plan update team will be at the February 3 Executive Committee meeting and encouraged everyone to attend. She outlined the update process for 2009 that includes:

- Updating three neighborhood plans around light rail stations in southeast by the end of the year;
- Creating status reports for all neighborhoods except those that have undergone recent major planning efforts; and
- The Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC).

She noted that the Commission and NPAC will host a series of public meetings and that the first series of meetings will introduce draft status reports and solicit feedback about the reports. She noted that the second series of meetings will present the final status reports. Ms. Wilson added that more information will be provided at the February 3 Executive Committee meeting and that Diana Canzoneri is working with the neighborhood plan update team to help create the status reports.

Ms. Wilson said that Commissioners Josh Brower and Kay Knapton represent the Commission at NPAC, which meets monthly, and that Commissioner Amalia Leighton serves as an alternate.

Vice-Chair Fiori asked if the Commissioners could get an electronic version of the process timeline. Katie Sheehy said that she would work with the project team to get a version that could be sent to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there was a draft or outline of the status reports available for review. Ms. Wilson replied that the team will provide that information at the February 3 Executive Committee meeting.

Commissioner Brower, who currently serves as co-chair of the NPAC, stated that the group sees itself as driving the neighborhood plan update process. He noted that their second meeting is on January 27, where they will continue to work on their charter and workplan. Commissioner Brower suggested that the Commission should start thinking about how the outreach meetings will be co-hosted, particularly because it needs to be done quickly. He added that NPAC has 13 milestones to reach by the end of the year.

Commissioner Kaplan asked what the Commission's role is supposed to be in the outreach meetings. Ms. Wilson replied that it will be discussed at the February 3 meeting. She added that her initial thoughts were that the Commission could provide the background about neighborhood plans and how they fit in with the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Wilson asked Commissioners to bring their ideas to the Executive Committee meeting on February 3.

Commissioner Kaplan expressed concern that these meetings might be taken over by individual's specific objectives. He noted that this is a contentious subject and suggested that strict rules should be established about what is and is not up for discussion. Commissioner Brower replied that that is what NPAC is currently working on and that there will be training for NPAC members in early February to ensure that everyone starts with the same understanding of the planning process. Commissioner Brower noted that this is not a new forum to fight long-standing neighborhood battles; instead it will establish a uniform structure for the neighborhood plan updates.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if Commissioners could sit in on the training. Chair Amato suggested that perhaps the Commission could have its own training separately.

Vice-Chair Fiori said that the neighborhood plan update process seems like a good way to focus scarce resources. He added that the City cannot plan the way it did previously.

▪ **Seattle's Transit Communities**

- Staff report & discussion (Wilson/Sheehy)
- Report outline
- Opportunities for coordination with Neighborhood Plan Updates, Comp Plan Update, etc.
- Update on Roundtable Report

Ms. Wilson directed the Commissioners to review the DRAFT report that is intended to summarize the November 20th Seattle's Transit Communities roundtable discussion. Ms. Sheehy briefly discussed the outline for the Seattle's Transit Communities report ([see attached](#)). Ms. Wilson noted that the recommendations will be one of the important things for the Commission to consider. She

added that the neighborhood plan updates are one opportunity that the report could influence. Ms. Wilson noted that the Comprehensive Plan is also a big opportunity, particularly the 2011 update that will address growth targets and other framework issues. Ms. Wilson walked the Commissioners through the roundtable summary report that will be released soon.

Vice-Chair Fiori indicated that he would like to see an outline of the best practices section before staff begins to write the report.

Commissioner Leighton suggested that the cover could be changed to highlight that this is a summary for the roundtable discussion rather than the actual report. Ms. Wilson agreed that the cover could be simplified.

Commissioner Hough Beck asked if any pictures were taken during the roundtable. Ms. Wilson replied that there were not.

Commissioner McDonald suggested that perhaps it would be helpful to include an introductory paragraph that indicates the report summarizes comments made at the roundtable into general categories. Chair Amato agreed that the first paragraph does indicate that information but that it does not stand out enough.

Commissioner Leighton suggested that the document be called a 'roundtable summary'. Ms. Wilson agreed that would help eliminate confusion.

Chair Amato, Commissioners Hough Beck, Johnson and McDonald suggested other clarifications within the document.

Commissioner Knapton added that the certainty about new regional transit is what creates the opportunity to focus on transit communities; it should be highlighted. Commissioners Hough Beck, Johnson and McDonald agreed. Ms. Wilson stated that certainty was an important part of the discussion and that it should be included in the summary report.

Commissioner Michelle Zeidman asked if a vision was articulated at the roundtable. Ms. Sheehy replied that there was a lot of discussion about the need for one and that it still needs to be established.

Commissioner Kaplan commented that the LUT committee has discussed the idea that clarity comes from being able to see the transit systems being built throughout the city and region. He added that this certainty will help clearly define and articulate a vision.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 9:00 am.