



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 13, 2008
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Tony To - Chair; Linda Amato, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Chelsea Levy, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Kirsten Pennington

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist, Andrea Clinkscales-Intern

Commissioners Absent

Tom Eanes, M. Michelle Mattox

Guests

Steve Nicholas, Office of Sustainability and the Environment; Amalia Leighton, Joshua Brower, New Commission Appointees

In Attendance

Rebecca Herzfeld, Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff; Anthony Russo, Ron Sudderth, Urban Commercial Properties; Annie Vu, Elizabeth Campbell, Jessica Vets, Interbay Neighborhood Association; Chris Leman

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- **Minutes Approval**

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the February 14, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Colie Hough Beck seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

▪ **Chairs Report**

Chair Tony To reported to the Commission on the recent Affordable Housing Action Agenda release event. He stated that about 125-150 people attended the forum, including 6 Councilmembers. He added that after releasing the Commission's action agenda, there was an excellent panel discussion where leaders from labor, the environmental community, developers, and non profit housing advocates discussed the Commission's proposed strategies. Chair To noted that Councilmember Sally Clark put forward a Comprehensive Plan amendment that would forward on some of the proposed Comprehensive Plan changes that the Commission recommended in the report. He added that Commission staff and the HNUC Committee have put together a small and manageable list of amendments that they think could be considered this year. Chair To continued that staff will send it out to the full commission for feedback soon and then offer it to Councilmember Clark.

Chair To noted the upcoming meetings and events.

Chair To welcomed the two new Commissioner appointees, Josh Brower and Amalia Leighton. He noted that they were appointed to the Commission by Mayor Nickels and will be officially confirmed next week by City Council. Chair To expressed his gratitude that they both could attend today's meeting and noted that both Mr. Brower and Ms. Leighton will be great assets to the Commission. Chair To asked them to tell the Commission about themselves.

Ms. Leighton stated that she is a civil engineer at SVR Design. She noted that her company is supportive of her involvement in the Commission. Ms. Leighton stated that her firm works on a variety of projects, from sidewalks to major roadways, and is involved with affordable housing, transportation planning, and a variety of other issues. She added that she is extremely excited to return to the Commission after serving as last year's Get Engaged Commissioner.

Mr. Brower stated, although he is originally from Vermont, he has lived here for 18 years. He noted that he is married with children. Mr. Brower stated that he is a land use lawyer for a boutique firm dealing with natural resources. He added that in the past, he worked in land use planning and that he loves policy and sincerely appreciates the opportunity to join the Commission and to be a part of discussions on the important issues facing the city.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **Presentation: Seattle's Vision for Sustainability (Part 1)**
- Steve Nicholas, Director, Office of Sustainability and the Environment

Steve Nicholas presented a power point presentation. The presentation is attached.

Chair To invited Steve Nicholas to the table to provide a presentation on Seattle's vision for sustainability. He added that Mr. Nicholas is the Director of the Office for Sustainability and Environment (OSE). Chair To noted that his presentation today is part one of a two part series on Seattle's Vision for Sustainability. Chair To stated that as the stewards of Seattle's Comp Plan the Commission is continually thinking about sustainability as it relates to the way Seattle and the region grows. He added that the Commission regularly considers environmental and green building initiatives as it relates to land use, transportation and development. Chair To stated that, today, the Commission has asked Steve to begin with a high level overview of Seattle's vision for sustainability including some of the Mayor's big Climate and Environmental initiatives. He added that the hope is that Mr. Nicholas' presentation will help set a larger context for some of the more specific initiatives that the Commission considers. Chair To continued that, at the next Commission meeting, we will be looking more closely at the City's Green Building and Green Infrastructure efforts.

Mr. Nicholas began by stating that he had spent time in Macedonia. He stated a linguistic mix-up there revealed to him that sustainability is not just saving salmon or polar bears, but about saving ourselves. Mr. Nicholas added that the Comprehensive Plan is the city's touchstone for sustainability and the Commission's role as stewards of the Comp Plan put them in a central role when it comes to sustainability in Seattle.

Mr. Nicholas noted that OSE focuses on the environmental aspects of sustainability and that it used to be more focused on making the internal aspects of city government more sustainable but now it is more focused on the City as a whole. He added that OSE is the hub of the wheel in city government efforts on sustainability; they initiate, incubate and institutionalize sustainability efforts; they coordinate and integrate these efforts; and they track and report on these efforts. Mr. Nicholas noted that recent successes include an 80 percent reduction of pesticides used by the city.

Mr. Nicholas noted that the guiding document for OSE is the Environmental Action Agenda and that this document includes the Climate Protection Agenda, the Green Seattle Initiative, the Restore Our Waters Initiative, and creating Healthy People and Communities.

Mr. Nicholas mentioned that in regards to the Green Seattle Initiative, the city is working to protect and restore its urban forest. He added that the Parks Department did a study and found that the city's canopy has dwindled from 42% to 18%. Mr. Nicholas noted that the Mayor has set a goal of getting the canopy up to 30 percent by 2036. He added that the Emerald City Task Force recently completed its work developing incentive, education and regulation tactics to increase the canopy. He noted that this effort is focused both on public and private property.

Mr. Nicholas explained that the Climate Protection Agenda includes the Mayor's Climate Agreement, which is a voluntary agreement with over 800 Mayors to reach the goals set in the Kyoto protocol. He noted that Seattle is on a trend to produce far more carbon emissions and it must be reversed. Mr. Nicholas noted that 60% of its emissions of greenhouse gases are from transportation, so we must work to reduce vehicle miles traveled and create more clean fuels. He added that they also want to make more energy efficient buildings and clean energy. Mr. Nicholas stated that OSE is working on its Climate Action Now initiative to get citizens more involved in personal efforts to end climate change. He continued that the Climate Partnership is a voluntary group focusing on the business community and their efforts to decrease carbon emissions. Mr. Nicholas stated that there is work at the state and federal level to stop climate change and that Smart growth is also a linchpin of OSE's effort, to decrease vehicle miles traveled.

Commissioner Mark Johnson stated that his business had searched for a green business certification similar to what the Bay Area has and that he couldn't find any. Mr. Nicholas replied that hopefully the Climate Partnership will eventually become an organization that offers a certification. He added that it is currently being considered to spin out into its own organization.

Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck asked how much outreach OSE did in the community on climate change issues. Mr. Nicholas answered that they did quite a bit in relation to their various initiatives. He added that it will be up to a more state-oriented organization to do outreach to other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington asked what the biggest barriers are to achieving OSE's goals and wondered how the Commission could help. Mr. Nicholas responded that getting information to the public is particularly important. He added that the idea that you can increase growth and the tree canopy at the same time should be considered possible. Mr. Nicholas noted that the aura around property rights is a big barrier to OSE's work, as well as the public's preference for roads over transit and their lack of a willingness to pay for public transit.

Commissioner Linda Amato stated that she attended a neighborhood planning forum where it seemed people have very conflicting ideas of what sustainability is. She noted that some thought it simply meant their neighborhood staying exactly the same. Mr. Nicholas replied that he agreed and that they were currently working on metrics for what sustainability means.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan asked what the best way to get more people involved was. Mr. Nicholas suggested that the Commission check out SeattleCAN.org. He added that there are a variety of ways OSE is trying to get more creative, one example is a baseball card given out at a Mariner's game with climate change information on it. Mr. Nicholas concluded that it is always a challenge to engage traditionally unengaged sectors of the public, and OSE will have to continue to work hard on achieving this goal.

▪ **Public Comment: 2008 Comp Plan Action**

Chair To stated that the Commission has allotted time on the agenda for public comments regarding the proposed Comp Plan amendments. He noted that there would be an additional public comment period at the end of the meeting for comments not regarding the Comp Plan. Chair To asked the four members of the public who wished to make comment to keep their remarks to about 2 minutes each so that they all would get a chance to comment.

Chair To reminded the members of the public that the Planning Commission is strictly an advisory body and they do not carry any formal authority. He added that the Mayor and City Council will make the decisions on matters and the Planning Commission is asked to provide decision makers with their independent and objective advice.

Ron Sudderth stated that he owned Urban Commercial Properties and had been involved in real estate in Seattle for many years. He added that the Commission should not paint Ballard with its SoDo brush. Mr. Sudderth noted that he was aware of the potential loss of jobs that the loss of industrial lands causes but noted that he had the tacit support of the citizens of Ballard. He referenced Land Use Goal 147.5 and 147.6 in the Comprehensive Plan, which states that IG zones are most appropriate in MICs or on waterways, and that industrial zones are not appropriate in urban villages. Mr. Sudderth concluded that both of these goals reveal that the Nelson properties should be considered for a rezone.

Elizabeth Campbell stated that she is a Magnolia resident getting her Master's at the University of Washington in Public Administration. She noted that her comments are in regards to the aerial replacement of the viaduct amendment. Ms. Campbell noted that she felt that she was talking to people who had already closed their minds. She added that the previous amendment was political and not about creating a sustainable city. Ms. Campbell stated that research on the aerial options was kept from the public and that she wants the Commission to revisit their draft letter. She concluded that she is not advocating a bridge cross Elliott Bay.

Jessica Vets stated that she represented the Interbay Neighborhood Association and wished to discuss proposed Comp Plan Amendment 18. She stated that the neighborhood wants development and wants industrial land but they also want the opportunity to allow light industry to mix with commercial and other uses. Ms. Vets noted that is why they want to remove land from the MIC – to allow light industry to thrive in their neighborhood and to be included in an upcoming DPD study.

Chris Leman stated that he is the Chair of the City Neighborhood Council (CNC) and that he is working on getting more public meetings webcasted. He stated that the Commission's draft letter recommends that two of his proposed amendments not be studied further, including the recommendation to create an open and participatory government element in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Leman noted that this includes a section on providing draft documents to the public before meetings. Mr. Leman stated he had been refused draft reports until he was at the meeting where they were being reviewed. He added that sustainable cities also include empowering citizens and that the Commission should not be opposed to an amendment that would encourage more grass roots participation.

Chair To again reminded attendees that the Commission is an advisory body that provides advice to decision makers. He noted that the Seattle City Council would act on the matter and noted the date of the upcoming hearing on proposed amendments.

- **ACTION: 2008 Proposed Comp Plan Amendments**
- Discussion and Possible Vote

Ms. Wilson provided some background on the Commission's involvement in the Comp Plan amendment process. She stated that the Commission had received two briefings from Council Central staff on the variety of amendments that had been submitted. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission informed them that those amendments that were submitted by Council as part of the last portion of the process would not be reviewed by the Commission due to a lack of time. She added that the Commission must send their comments to Council by March 17th, as stipulated by Council. Ms. Wilson reminded Commissioners that this was step one in a two-part process – the first part being deciding if the amendments should move forward for further study, the second to decide if they should be approved or denied. She stated that the two new Commission appointees could participate and listen to the discussion but should not take part in discussions of actions or vote on actions until they were confirmed by Council. Ms. Wilson concluded with reminding the Commissioners that, if they recused themselves from certain amendments, they should leave the room when discussion of that amendment begins.

Chair To called for disclosures and/or recusals.

Recusal & Disclosures: Josh Brower recused himself from proposed amendment #10. Amalia Leighton recused herself from proposed amendment #10 and disclosed that her firm, SvR Design is working on the pedestrian master plan which relates to proposed amendment #13. Commissioner Colie Hough Beck, Hough Beck and Baird, disclosed that the Port of Seattle is one of her clients and has an interest in some of the proposed amendments. In addition she recused herself from discussion and voting on proposed amendment #17. Commissioner Martin Kaplan disclosed that he is a resident of Queen Anne and a member of the Queen Anne Community Council and has attended numerous meetings regarding the Dravus Rezone proposal which is discussed in proposed amendment # 18. Commissioner Kirsten Pennington disclosed that the Port of Seattle is a client of her firm, CH2M Hill.

Chair To stated that he would like the Commission to separate the letter into two segments for discussion. He noted that the first would be the proposed amendments on which there is a consensus and the second those where there is not complete agreement. Chair To stated that proposed amendments 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15,16,17 are part of the first group which have had consensus and 1,10,13,18 are part of the second which have had a more extended discussion.

ACTION: Commissioner Leslie Miller moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the draft letter for proposed amendments 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15, & 16. Commissioner Linda Amato seconded the motion.

Commissioner Chris Fiori stated that if proposed amendment #18 is to be considered separately, then the other amendments related to industrial lands should be considered separately. Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated that she agreed that the Commission should be consistent with number 18.

Commissioner Linda Amato stated that she too believed that the Commission should be consistent but felt that meant that all of the proposed amendments concerning industrial lands should not be considered further in the 2008 amendment cycle, including #18. She added that to start treating any of the industrial-lands amendments differently would be to second guess all the work that the Commission has done on the issue over the past years.

Commissioner Fiori stated it was an issue of timing. He added that, while he agreed that criteria should be created for what land should be removed from industrial zoning before deciding on any specific proposal, it wouldn't take DPD that long to develop those criteria. Commissioner Fiori noted that if they developed them quickly, the industrial lands-related amendments could be considered this year rather than waiting a year.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan stated that while he agreed with the idea of being consistent, it remains important for the Commission to not be consistent just for the sake of being consistent. He added that he feels that some of the amendments deserved further vetting and may qualify for us to advance for study.

Commissioner Finrow proposed creating a task force to develop criteria for industrial lands rezone requests. He stated this issue needs to be worked through, and the Commission could help make this

happen faster.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan made a friendly amendment to pull proposed amendments 3, 5, 6 & 7 out of the original motion for later discussion. Commissioner Leslie Miller agreed to this friendly amendment.

ACTION: Commissioner Leslie Miller moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the draft letter for proposed amendments 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15, & 16. Commissioner Linda Amato seconded the motion. Commissioner Martin Kaplan made a friendly amendment to pull proposed amendments 3, 5, 6 & 7 out of the motion. Commissioners Miller and Amato agreed to this friendly amendment. The motion to approve the Commission recommendation as stated in the draft letter on amendments 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 approved unanimously.

Chair To called for a motion to approve the Commission's recommendation regarding amendment #17 as outlined in the SPC draft letter.

Commissioner Hough-Beck left the room for the discussion and voting on proposed amendment # 17.

ACTION: Commissioner Mark Johnson moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the draft letter for proposed amendment 17. Commissioner Jerry Finrow seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair To called for a motion to approve the Commission's recommendation regarding amendment #1 as outlined in the SPC draft letter.

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the draft letter for proposed amendment 1. Commissioner Martin Kaplan seconded the motion. Commissioner Kevin McDonald made a friendly amendment to add language that would clarify the intent of the amendment in relation to building lids over I-5. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair To called for a motion to approve the Commission's recommendation regarding amendment #10 as outlined in the SPC draft letter.

Josh Brower and Amalia Leighton left the room for the discussion and voting on proposed amendment # 10.

ACTION: Commissioner Mark Johnson moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the SPC draft letter for proposed amendment 10. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair To called for a motion to approve the Commission's recommendation regarding amendment #13 as outlined in the SPC draft letter.

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the Commission's recommendations as outlined in the draft letter for proposed amendment 13. Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded. Commissioner Pennington made a friendly amendment to delete the last three sentences in letter. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair To stated that the Commission would now move on to the industrial related proposed amendments; amendments 3,5,6,7 and 18.

Commissioner Fiori stated that the Commission should recommend further studying these amendments in the 2008 amendment cycle but with the express stipulation that criteria for deciding what land should be rezoned from industrial to another use must be developed before a final decision is made.

Commissioner McDonald stated that he had a problem with creating criteria after proposals had already been made. He expressed his thought that this was bad procedure due to the fact that it would not be possible for the current applicants to know what the criteria would be before they submitted their proposed amendment.

Commissioner Johnson stated that there are criteria for rezoning land in the land use code. He felt that the question was whether or not we change those criteria. Commissioner Johnson noted that the amendments being discussed involved the Future Land use Map and when it's acceptable to change this map. He added that this is about changing Comp Plan criteria and he said he didn't think it was inappropriate to hold off on approving the amendments until that criterion has been developed.

ACTION: Commissioner Chris Fiori made a motion to place the proposed industrial-lands related amendments (3, 5, 6, 7 & 18) in a separate section of the letter, along with a paragraph explaining that the Commission would like to see the fast tracking of the DPD and Council-created work plan for further studying industrial lands.

Commissioner Fiori noted that the element of the work plan involving creating criteria for which land should be rezoned from industrial to another use should be sped up. He added that if this work is done in time, these amendments will be considered as part of the 2008 process using these criteria.

Commissioner Amato stated that when she said she wanted to create new criteria her intent was for the Commission to create criteria for what constitutes a clear and compelling public policy rationale for rezoning industrial land.

Commissioner Miller stated that she agreed that the City should not make decisions in a piecemeal fashion with regards to rezoning industrial lands, as this had been the conclusion of the Commission following years of study related to this issue. She added that it was also important to recognize that it isn't just an academic exercise, as land owners want to develop sooner rather than later. Commissioner Miller noted that some of these amendments may deserve further study and the Commission could state that they wished DPD would come up with criteria sooner rather than later.

Commissioner McDonald stated that pressure on DPD to complete the work can be placed by not moving the amendments forward. He added that in this way, such pressure would come from the applicants rather than the Commission.

Commissioner Kaplan stated that he agreed with the idea of consistency of developing criteria. He added that there is an overarching desire to be consistent on each site, and criteria simply won't answer the question of what should happen with each and every site. Commissioner Kaplan continued that sometimes these sites need to be considered as the individual and unique sites that they are.

Chair To stated that the Commission wrote a report on industrial lands and said there needed to be a public policy rationale before rezone decisions could occur. He added that if the Commission said these amendments cannot move forward, it would show how important it is to come up with clear guidance for better addressing industrial land in Seattle.

Commissioner Fiori stated that there was a difference between creating criteria and applying criteria. He noted that applying criteria is very difficult, but creating it is not. Commissioner Fiori added that the Commission could start drawing up criteria on a black board and come very close to whatever final criteria that would be developed after DPD had performed its additional study of industrial lands. He expressed his thought that the Commission should keep the momentum on criteria and move the amendments forward while pushing DPD to quickly develop criteria.

Commissioner Miller stated that she would like to rephrase her earlier statement by saying that the better position would be to not advance the amendments in accordance with the Commission's previously stated position, but still advocate for rationale and criteria to be developed by the city more quickly so that zoning questions could be addressed fairly according to measurable criteria.

ACTION: Commissioner Chris Fiori withdrew his motion.

ACTION: Commissioner Leslie Miller made a motion to recommend to not further study the proposed industrial-lands related amendments (3,5,6,7 & 18) but to place them as a group in the letter and advocate that DPD quickly develop criteria for rezoning industrial lands.

Commission Johnson seconded the motion.

Voting yes: Commissioners Amato, Johnson, Knapton, Levy, McDonald, Miller, Pennington and Chair To.

Voting no: Commissioners Fiori and Kaplan.

Abstaining: Commissioner Hough-Beck.

The motions passed with 8 in favor, 2 opposed and one abstention. Note: Commissioner Finrow was not present for the vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chair To called for any public comment not related to the Comprehensive Plan.

Chris Leman stated that the Commission was captive of its staff and of city departments and that it must be more transparent and allow the public to comment. He added that neighborhood planning was originally performed by allowing neighborhoods to hire consultants to assist them with their plans. Mr. Leman noted that the new proposal would be dominated by DPD. He stated the Commission had ignored these facts in its deliberation of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment related to this issue. Mr. Leman stated that the Commission had not heard from the public on this issue and needed to reflect on its current practices related to outreach and notice of meetings.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair To adjourned the meeting at 5:36 pm.