



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Tim Parham, Chair

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 08, 2018

Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Michael Austin, Eileen Canola, Veronica Guenther, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Kelly Rider, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble

**Commissioners Absent:** Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Patti Wilma

**Commission Staff:** Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst

**Guests:** Jason Johnson, Interim Director, Seattle Human Services Department

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

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

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

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Tim Parham called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

**ACTION: Commissioner Michael Austin moved to approve the October 25, 2018 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.**

#### Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events, including an Imagine Greater Downtown Advisory Group meeting, an Equitable Development Initiative Convening, the Urban Innovations Speakers Series with a focus on low-density residential areas and racial equity, and a Design Matters conference. Executive Director Murdock also reminded the Commissioners of the upcoming Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) training sessions with members of the Seattle Design Commission, Design Review Boards, and Historic Preservation Boards. She encouraged the Commissioners to sign up for one of the sessions. Lastly, she mentioned that Commissioner Sandra Fried recently had a baby.

## **Public Comment: 2017-2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Recommendations**

Nick Curatolo stated that he works in commercial real estate and development and has concerns about traffic impact fees. He is concerned about fees on developers that would lead to increasing rental rates. He also stated that it is not clear how impact fees would reduce traffic.

Patrick Foley also expressed concern about impact fees. He stated that there has not been a comprehensive analysis of this issue. He works for a small development company, Lake Union Partners. As a result of Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) and the Multi-Family Tax Exemption, one of their projects in the Central District will deliver more than 500 affordable housing units. He stated that impact fees would make that project not feasible.

Ian Morrison spoke on behalf of the Seattle Mobility Coalition. He stated that the SEPA comment process on the impact fees proposal is not complete. He encouraged the Commission to not take action on this proposal until the SEPA process is complete. He expressed concerns about how impact fees will affect housing policies. He stated that it is inappropriate to move forward on this issue at this time, as no ordinance has been made available for the public to review.

Marty Goodman, representing Holland Partner Group, expressed concern that the addition of impact fees will have unintended consequences, including more expensive housing and higher rents. He stated that MHA has only been partially implemented and the full effects have not yet been identified. He noted that if development projects are perceived to not be financeable, they won't get built. He stated that this is the wrong time to implement impact fees.

Barb Wilson, representing the Coalition for Housing Solutions, stated that a Comprehensive Plan Amendment on impact fees lays the groundwork for the implementation of impact fees. She referred the Commissioners to analysis on impact fees done by ECONorthwest determining that Seattle has some of the highest development fees per unit.

Sierra Hansen, representing the Up for Growth coalition, stated that the basic objection to impact fees is that they discourage people from living close to where they work. She encouraged the Commission to vote against moving this forward.

Steve Gillespie spoke on behalf of Seattle Pacific University in relation to the proposed Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment. He addressed the Commission's concern about this amendment setting precedent for removing industrial lands from a Manufacturing Industrial Center. He noted that there will be an extensive public process for the University's Major Institution Master Plan. He stated that major institutions create many jobs. This amendment would expand jobs where there are very few now.

## **Action: 2017-2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Recommendations**

***If you would like to view the 2017-2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Recommendations presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.***

Executive Director Murdock reminded the Commissioners that these Comprehensive Plan Amendments were docketed in 2017. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were not

called for in 2017, thus the Commission did not review proposals for docketing in 2018. Murdock emphasized the importance of taking action on the Commission's recommendations because the Comprehensive Plan can only be amended once per year and City Council will review and vote on these amendments in early December. This meeting is the last time the Commission will meet before that time. Murdock stated that the amendment related to impact fees would only add a list of transportation projects to the Comprehensive Plan. This amendment is necessary for the City to start the process to develop impact fee policies.

**DISCLOSURES: Commissioner Michael Austin recused himself from the discussion of the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment. He works for Perkins + Will, a consultant to Seattle Pacific University on their major institution planning process.**

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments Recommendations letter. The draft recommendations were based on comments at the October 25<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting. He described the rationale for each of the following recommendations:

1. Proposal: Seattle Pacific University
  - o Planning Commission recommendation: Do Not Adopt
2. Proposal: Impact fee amendments
  - o Planning Commission recommendation: Adopt
3. Proposal: Parking and affordable housing
  - o Planning Commission recommendation: Adopt as revised

#### *Commission Discussion*

- Commissioners emphasized that the impact fees amendment would only add a transportation projects list to the Comprehensive Plan. The projects on this list were developed by extensive work from the City. Approving this amendment would ensure that the right projects would be funded if impact fees were established. Commissioners stated that it is important to approve this list and trust that the City's elected leadership will review and develop impact fees that won't compromise the effectiveness of MHA legislation.
- A Commissioner noted that transportation impact fees have been studied extensively and that some studies suggest that impact fees limit the availability of housing in urban areas and are a more appropriate mechanism for suburban areas.
- Commissioners expressed concern that their Comprehensive Plan Amendments recommendations will be seen as an implicit support of impact fees. Commissioners suggested changing the draft letter language to clarify that they look forward to providing input on the policy implications of a transportation impact fee program.

- Commissioners stated that they want to clearly express their frustration with the lack of direction on industrial lands policy and they look forward to receiving policy recommendations for their review and comment.

The Commissioners suggested several revisions to the draft letter. Mr. Hoey reviewed the proposed revisions to ensure that all suggestions were incorporated into the revised letter.

**ACTION: Commissioner Grace Kim moved to approve the letter. Commissioner Lauren Squires seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter as revised passed. Commissioner Michael Austin recused himself from the Seattle Pacific University amendment and opposed the recommendation to adopt the impact fees amendment.**

**Briefing: Seattle Human Services Department Strategies to Address Homelessness**

Jason Johnson, Interim Director, Seattle Human Services Department

***If you would like to view the Seattle Human Services Department Strategies to Address Homelessness presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.***

Interim Director Johnson of the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) provided an overview of the City's response to the homelessness crisis. He stated that data shows an increase in homelessness across the Puget Sound region as well as the West Coast, especially San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland. Seattle has experienced a steady major increase in the last three to four years. Increases in the cost of housing have a clear correlation to the homeless population. King County relies on volunteers to count the homeless population. 6,320 people are living unsheltered in King County, of which 71% are unsheltered in Seattle. While the recent homeless counts noted a decline in the number of people living in tents, there was a significant increase of people living in vehicles. More shelters have opened and more people are living in shelters. A late 2016 survey of homeless in Seattle included focus groups and interviews of people living unsheltered. This survey showed that the homeless included a very young population and many that were already living in King County. The data also shows that homelessness disproportionately affects people of color, which points out systemic issues of racism.

HSD's response includes an approach that focuses on helping people to stay in their homes and avoid homelessness. This includes helping renters to avoid eviction. The City is implementing \$7 million in prevention programs funded by the 2016 Housing Levy. The City's emergency homeless services system includes options such as shelters, transitional housing, and permitted villages. Enhancements to shelter programs have been made that have changed the expectations of shelter. Enhanced shelters include storage and showers and can allow pets. Homeless people can work with social workers to facilitate their exit from the shelter system. The City's housing programs are encouraging more stable living situations. The Office of Housing has been able to provide a lot of affordable housing but we still need a lot more.

*Commission Discussion*

- Commissioners asked when the availability of Rapid Rehousing systems end. Interim Director Johnson answered that Rapid Rehousing services are no longer necessary as soon as a homeless person becomes self-sufficient. There is check-in every 6 months.
- Commissioners asked how many shelters are enhanced. Interim Director Johnson stated that the majority of shelters invested in by HSD are now enhanced. This does not include other programs such as Union Gospel Mission or Bread of Life shelters that do not receive public funding.
- Commissioners asked for more information about the correlation between a reduction in unsanctioned encampments and sweeps. Interim Director Johnson stated that the Navigation Teams made up of police officers and social workers go into large and dangerous (from a public health perspective) situations, clean up those spaces, and get people indoors. He stated that the number of sanctioned encampments (or tiny house villages) has gone up. Sanctioned encampments have portable bathrooms and residents can secure their belongings.
- Commissioners asked how diversion is determined and set up. Interim Director Johnson replied by saying that diversion starts with a discussion, engaging with the individual, asking questions to determine what else is possible other than being housed in a shelter.
- Commissioners inquired about the level of local government spending on the homelessness issue compared with other cities. Interim Director Johnson said that Barbara Poppe was hired by the City to help with the homelessness strategy. She compared how much we were spending on this issue compared to other cities and found that we are spending two times more than other cities in local government resources.
- Commissioners asked for more information about the demographic statistics of the homeless population, specifically the breakdown by race. Commissioners suggested that there is a increasing trend of “invisible homelessness” that includes people sleeping on couches, etc. Interim Director Johnson stated that there is a community of people that do not show up in the homeless data. His department is working with others, including the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, to ensure that specific populations are not ignored in the City’s response.
- Commissioners referenced a recent Seattle Women’s Commission report on eviction and asked for more information about how the City is preventing evictions that could lead to homelessness. Interim Director Johnson stated that eviction is often a result of very small issues. The City is working to determine the most vulnerable people and get them inside as soon as possible. Efforts are underway to help tenants with legal aid (e.g., helping people know their rights). The City is also working on trainings with property managers. He stated that the Seattle Housing Authority has a lot of rigid regulations. The City is partnering with them to help avoid evictions.
- Commissioners asked what percentage of homeless are students. Interim Director Johnson replied that there is not a lot of specific data, but there are indications that trend is increasing significantly statewide. There is a strong interest in addressing that problem from the Governor and the State’s Department of Commerce.
- Commissioners asked for more information about additional high-level strategies other than increasing the supply of housing. Interim Director Johnson stated that the cost of housing is a major indicator, but health indicators are also important. He noted that Washington state does not fund behavioral health at the level we need. The City is working with other agencies to determine other potential enhancements to the criminal justice system, foster care system, and behavioral health system that would help reduce homelessness.

- Commissioners asked for more information on what percentage of the City's funding for the homelessness strategy is determined by HSD. Interim Director Johnson stated that the overall strategy is included in the Mayor's budget proposal. His department has the opportunity to advise the Mayor on budget priorities but has less influence on the City Council. Once the budget is established, HSD becomes the administrator. An ongoing role for the department is to communicate with the public what is working and what is not.

The Commissioners thanked Interim Director Johnson for his presentation.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.**