



**City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission**

Amalia Leighton, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 12, 2015
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Michael Austin, Lauren Craig, Molly Esteve, Yolanda Ho, Grace Kim, Kara Martin, Jake McKinstry, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Spencer Williams, Patti Wilma

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Luis Borrero, Sandra Fried, Amalia Leighton, David Shelton

COMMISSION STAFF

Diana Canzoneri - Demographer, Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant, Vanessa Murdock – Executive Director, Katie Sheehy - Policy Analyst (on loan from DPD)

GUESTS

Ryan Moore, Lisa Rutzik, DPD; Catherine Benotto, SPC Emerita and HALA advisory Group member

IN ATTENDANCE

Cindi Barker, Sara Belz, Alissa Neuman, Corey Patton, John Pehrson, Aly Pennucci

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's Report & Minutes Approval

- Vice-Chair Marj Press

Vice-Chair Press called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Commissioner Tim Parham moved to approve the October 22, 2015 minutes. Commissioner Michael Austin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Update: Design Review Evaluation

- Ryan Moore and Lisa Rutzick, Department of Planning and Development

Vice-Chair Press welcomed Ryan Moore and Lisa Rutzick from DPD.

If you would like to view the document presented on the Design Review Evaluation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

Presentation overview:

Purpose of Design Review

- Encourage **better design** - to ensure new development enhances the city and fits into neighborhoods.
- Provides **flexibility** in application of development standards.
- Improve **communication** and mutual understanding among developers, neighborhoods and the City.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioners asked for clarification on what uses would be subject to Design Review. Ms. Rutzik replied that currently institutions are not but would be in the proposal.

Ms. Rutzik stated that recent thinking has been that affordable housing projects could be administrative review only. Mr. Moore added that this could act as an incentive for-profit developers who could go through a hybrid process rather than full design review if they were building affordable housing. He added that the concept is being tested with affordable housing providers.

Commissioners felt that the thresholds are very important and cautioned against creating an unintended loophole. They also suggested that early design guidance (EDG) should be public and not administrative, and that board design guidance should happen earlier in the process. Ms. Rutzik replied that she felt very confident that the in-house planners can handle the early issues as it is deploying an existing skill set in the right way. She added that all projects would be required to do early and ongoing engagement with the public with multiple interactions with the community.

The Commissioners shared their concern that with this new proposed structure, departures for the most creative solutions would be difficult to grant and receive and that waiting for the second design review meeting to get those departures approved would be very challenging for the designers and proponents. Ms. Rutzik noted that staff is proposing a cultural shift in the program, placing more weight on the planner and the board would have to build on that staff work, even for departures.

The Commissioners expressed their support for the concept of on-line input noting the benefits of an educational component to the public engagement. They wondered about how the open dialogue will work. Ms. Rutzik answered that it is a little tricky but there would be designated time during deliberation for questions and clarifications before the summary conclusions.

The Commissioners asked for clarification on the board composition. Ms. Rutzik stated that the existing structure has always been a bit unclear and that the new proposed board composition would reflect the design, neighborhood and business community.

There was discussion regarding what early and ongoing outreach meant with Commissioners noting that it has been done in Portland and did not work well. They noted that the quality of the engagement is probably more important than the quantity.

Commissioners asked about the timeline. Ms. Rutzik replied that the plan was to get DPD the recommendation report towards the end of November, followed by a SEPA analysis. She added that public

comment on the legislation would be early next year then to the new version of the City Council's land use committee. Ms. Rutzik continued that August 2016 would be the implementation of the legislation with the actual launch being about November of next year.

Commissioners stressed the importance of predictability and transparency. They wondered if there was a way to have the EDG be the public meeting and have select design review board members who can review the project at both phases, EDG and recommendation, so that it is not just staff making those decisions. The Commissioners suggested that educating community members about the new proposed program will reduce the animosity.

Vice-Chair Press thanked Ms. Rutzik and Mr. Moore.

Public Comment on Planning Commission's Seattle 2035 Public Draft Letter

Cindi Barker gave public comment noting that the description of what growth along the arterials is accessible should be elevated to the overall letter and not just a specific comment. She was shocked that that the Commission did not review the neighborhood planning element. Ms. Barker stated that she understood that the Commission had a large work load but asked that they consider that the neighborhood planning element was shrunk by 2/3 and implementation policies are not supported. Ms. Barker continued that there is so much work in planning now that does not include the neighborhood planning element and that these documents do not have any implementation guidance from the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the people from the neighborhoods really would like to see more implementation actions.

Discussion and Action: Planning Commission's Seattle 2035 Public Draft letter

- **Vanessa Murdock, SPC Executive Director**

If you would like to view the document presented on the Seattle 20135 Public Draft Letter, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

Presentation Overview

Major Update to Comprehensive Plan

Overall Comments:

- Appreciate meaningful effort to eliminate redundancy
- Appreciate responses to SPC previous comments
 - ✓ Plan is largely focused on and incorporates equity
 - ✓ SPC comments are particularly reflected in Housing and Transportation
 - ✓ Vast improvement in flexibility in Land Use Element

Urge Mayor to:

- articulate a more explicit vision for an equitable Seattle
- make the plan more accessible and relevant
- monitor our progress to achieve racial and social equity in Seattle

Commission Discussion:

Commissioners offered edits and suggestions for the letter including the issue of frequent and reliable transit service and the idea of improving transit and the opportunity to have a future projects map. Commissioners suggested it be mapped on an annual basis.

Commissioner Grace Kim moved to approve the letter. Commissioner Kara Martin seconded the motion. The letter was approved.

Ms. Murdock reviewed the element specific recommendations. There were several edits suggested by Commissioners.

Commissioners asked about who would be receiving this and if it was the most effective format. Ms. Murdock stated that the letter will be addressed to the Mayor and that City Council members as well as City staff would be copied.

Commissioner Spencer Williams moved to approve the element specific recommendations. Commissioner Lauren Craig seconded the motion. The element specific recommendations were approved.

Perspectives on HALA recommendations

- **Catherine Benotto, Planning Commission emerita and HALA Advisory Group member**

Vice-Chair Press welcomed Catherine Benotto.

Ms. Benotto gave an overview of the HALA Advisory Group and their first meetings. She noted that they had about 26-27 meetings and that another group met which came to the Grand Bargain.

Ms. Benotto reported that the staff did a great job but as things got synthesized down some nuances were lost and the HALA advisors worked to get those back in. She added that there were breakout groups with technical experts and that she was on the zoning group.

She noted that the HALA advisors voted on all the recommendations and discussed the ones which did not have consensus.

Ms. Benotto stated that with the Grand Bargain groups met at all hours to come to consensus. She reported on all of the recommendations including affordable housing, equity, single family, multi family, lowrise, schools, ADUs, DADUs, rental housing for those with criminal records and cross-laminated timber.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioners expressed their thanks to Catherine for her work on the HALA group and had general questions and discussion about the recommendations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cindi Barker stated that she was on the same page as Ms. Benotto regarding some flexibility in some single family zoned areas. She asked the Commission to help the City to envision what can be done in single family zoned areas. In regards to the Grand Bargain, she noted that 20% of affordable housing in new multifamily development is required by other cities and that developers in Seattle are not complaining because only 5% is

required, per the Grand Bargain. She shared her concern that the Bargain should have done better adding that the neighborhood-level zoning discussions will be challenging.

John Pehrson stated that he has participated in over 100 design reviews. He indicated that pre-hearings were good and that they get good results for the community and the design. Mr. Pehrson noted that the board meeting should be at the EDG where the important decisions are made. He added that one thing not mentioned was DPD's presence is administrative only and not professional. He felt that this was a terrible because the City does have perspective.

Mr. Pehrson stated that with HALA he takes a different view noting that the Grand Bargain was a bargain between affordable housing and the development community and that the development community was represented by very powerful people. He shared his concern that the city won't end up with inclusive housing. Mr. Pehrson stated that the bargain did not involve the community and that these two groups gave away what the neighborhood owns, which is density. He continued that City Council finalized it last week and it was a little disturbing from his standpoint.

Ms. Benotto responded that she agreed with Mr. Pehrson's comments regarding the professionalism of city planners.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Press adjourned the meeting at 5:33 pm.