



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Linda Amato, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori, Josh Brower, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Colie Hough-Beck, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson-Director, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Assistant, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer, Lee Roberts-Intern

Commissioners Absent

Chair Linda Amato, Mark Johnson, M. Michelle Mattox, Leslie Miller, Tony To

Guests

Ray Gastil -Planning Director, DPD; Michelle Zeidman

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

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ **Chairs Report**

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori noted the upcoming meetings and events. He noted that the Executive Committee would meet next Tuesday, September 16; the LUT Committee will meet next Thursday, September 7; and the next Full Commission meeting will take place on Thursday, September 25.

Vice-Chair Fiori introduced Michelle Zeidman. Michelle is the new 'Get Engaged' member of the Commission for this year. He noted that she will be officially confirmed within the next few weeks and that the Commission is delighted to have her join. Vice-Chair Fiori then invited Ms. Zeidman to introduce herself.

Ms. Zeidman stated that she is pursuing concurrent degrees in Public Administration and Urban Planning from the University of Washington. She added that she has lived in Seattle for 8 years having

moved from California. Ms. Zeidman concluded that she is interested in land use and policy and looks forward to working with the Commission.

▪ **Minutes Approval**

Commissioners suggested several small changes to the draft minutes.

ACTION: Commissioner Kevin McDonald moved to approve the July 24, 2008 minutes as amended. Commissioner Josh Brower seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

COMMISSION ACTIONS

- **ACTION: 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments**
- **Planning Commission Recommendations to City Council**

Vice-Chair Fiori called for any disclosures or recusals on matters related to the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Recusal & Disclosure: Noted for the record are the following disclosures:

- Commissioner Hough-Beck disclosed that the Port of Seattle is one of her clients at *Hough Beck & Baird Inc.* She noted that the Port of Seattle may have an interest in some of the proposed amendments.
- Commissioner Brower disclosed that his firm, *Tupper Mack Brower PLLC*, represents clients who own industrially-zoned property, though none of their property would be affected by the proposed amendments.
- Commissioner Kaplan disclosed that he is a member of the *Queen Anne Community Council* and has been in numerous meetings about the Dravus rezone proposal and discussions related to item 18.
- Commissioner Leighton disclosed that her firm, *SvR Design*, is working on the pedestrian master plan, which relates to item G.
- Commissioner Eanes recused himself from all matters related to future land use amendments affecting industrial lands. He also recused himself from the matter related to prohibiting new surface parking in the Downtown Mixed Residential zone with both a comprehensive plan amendment and implementing code amendment.

Ms. Wilson provided some background about the Commission's review and discussion regarding the proposed 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments. She noted that the Commissioners have reviewed the proposed amendments numerous times over the past year, in the LUT and Executive Committees, in addition to the full Commission. Ms. Wilson added that, while the Commission had originally planned to take action on July 24, they were unable to do so because they had not yet received the final ordinance or Director's Report from DPD. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission requested and was granted an extension for their comments.

Ms. Wilson noted that once the Commission has approved the letter it would be sent to Council by the beginning of next week. She stated that Councilmember Clark has invited the Commission to attend the next PLUNC committee to provide their recommendations in person.

Ms. Wilson brought the Commissioner's attention to a couple of points in the draft letter of recommendations for 2008 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Regarding the matter related to *B. Change the Future Land Use Map designation of land within the Downtown Urban Center from Industrial to Commercial Mixed Use* Ms. Wilson reminded the Commissioners that there has been much discussion about this specific recommendation. She noted that the SPC's current recommendation states that while the Livable South Downtown Study does appear to provide a reasonable public policy rationale for this amendment, the industrial land survey has yet to be completed. She stated that in order to remain consistent with previous positions, the Commission recommended deferring approval of this amendment until after that study is completed. She noted that the Commission recommendation notes this area is outside the MIC and is currently zoned IC not IG and that a clearly stated public policy basis may indeed exist but the reason to defer is to be consistent and ensure decisions are being made when the work and analysis has been completed.

Commissioner Jerry Finrow asked who proposed this amendment. Ms. Wilson responded that DPD proposed the amendment. The Commissioners discussed the longer-term implications of rezoning this property and ultimately agreed that it is best to defer the amendment until after the industrial jobs initiative has been completed.

Ms. Wilson stated that the proposed amendments C through E relate to the transfer of development rights within Pioneer Square and the International District. She noted that these were late arrivals related to the Livable South Downtown project and that both the Executive and DPD recommend approval. Commissioners agreed to approve these amendments.

Ms. Wilson indicated that proposed amendments G & H these were ones that the Commission initially did not approve, but that the new language is acceptable. She noted that the Commissioners could express their concern about the amendments as they were originally written in front of the Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee (PLUNC). The Commission agreed to approve these amendments as now written.

Ms. Wilson moved on to the Planning Commission's proposed amendments. She stated that the Commission proposes alternative language for J because the original intent had been lost in translation.

She noted that the Commission proposes that the amendment be written as follows:

“Rezoning that result in significant increases in density should be accompanied by a plan to coordinate public and private investments to address transportation, utilities, open space and other public services to accommodate new growth.”

The Commissioners briefly discussed the proposed revision and agreed to it with the clarification of ‘rezoning that *would* result in significant increases in density’ to clarify that the amendment addresses future rezoning.

Commissioners discussed proposed amendment L. Commissioner Kevin McDonald recommended a clarification in the formatting of the letter. The Commission agreed to this change. Vice-Chair Fiori commented on proposed amendments M and N. He stated that he wished to ensure that the Commission's priorities are clearly stated. Ms. Wilson noted that the difference is between a top priority and the *only* priority. Commissioner McDonald noted that the proposed amendment recognizes that some sites just aren't suitable for housing.

Ms. Wilson stated that there are also a few more proposed rezones to the FLUM; she added that the Commission concurs with DPD that they should be deferred until 2009, after the industrial lands study has been completed.

Ms. Wilson noted that Commissioners expressed concerns about the amendment process in Committee. She added that, while they do not propose specific changes within the letter, they expressed a desire to work with Council to improve the process for the future.

Vice-Chair Fiori asked for additional comments. Commissioners Johnson, Leighton and McDonald noted a couple of other changes to the draft letter that did not change the substance of the Commission's recommendations. All agreed to these changes.

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the letter. Commissioner Martin Kaplan seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed unanimously.

- **ACTION: Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee**
- Approve nomination of Planning Commission reps to NPAC

Recusal & Disclosure: No recusals or disclosures.

Vice-Chair Fiori noted that Commissioners Josh Brower and Kay Knapton have been nominated to be the representatives on the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved to approve the nominations. Commissioner Jerry Finrow seconded the motion. The motion to approve the nominations passed unanimously.

Ms. Wilson acknowledged that this will be a time consuming process and thanked Commissioners Brower and Knapton for volunteering.

UPDATES & DISCUSSION

- **Updates**
 - **Viaduct & Seawall Replacement (Tom Eanes)**

Commissioner Eanes updated the Commission about the status of the Viaduct and Seawall replacement project by summarizing a message that he had previously distributed via email. He noted that the Commission might want to take action prior to the selection of the final alternative(s). Commissioner Eanes stated specifically, that he was concerned about the exclusive focus on transportation planning

that does not take land uses into consideration. He added that this might work against Comprehensive Plan goals related to downtown, particularly as many of the ‘building blocks’ of the proposed scenarios include operations changes that would add capacity to the downtown street grid. Commissioner Eanes noted that a trial closure of the Viaduct might provide useful information and that City Council Chair Richard Conlin has also proposed a trial closure, but as of now there is no indication that will occur.

Commissioner Eanes noted that in addition to concerns about the pedestrian environment would be impacted by increasing capacity to the downtown grid, freight would not likely be able to maneuver through the street grid either. He reiterated that he believes the Commission should get on the record soon about: (1) whether or not the proposed operational changes meet Comprehensive Plan goals and policies; and (2) supporting a trial closure of the Viaduct.

Ms. Wilson stated that at the last Executive Committee meeting, they talked about putting room in our schedule to talk about the Viaduct and providing recommendations that would be finalized in October.

Commissioner Eanes indicated that the Commission should send their recommendations to all three executives. He noted that, while this is a better planning effort – they are talking about moving people and freight rather than just cars –they are still not looking at land use. Commissioner Eanes continued that the Commission might be the only body in the city, who can speak to these issues and that it’s an error to plan land use and transportation separately.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan stated that he has attended some of these meetings as a representative of the Queen Anne neighborhood and that there is a lot of tension between those who insist that capacity needs to be replaced either in a tunnel or elevated freeway and those who insist that the downtown grid can handle the traffic.

Commissioners Finrow and Eanes discussed whether or not a new EIS will have to be prepared for the final alternative. Commissioner Eanes indicated that the website for this project is very thorough and has all of the information that has been reviewed.

Commissioner Finrow suggested that the Executive Committee could meet with City Council Chair Conlin, or his assistant, to talk about the impact on the livability in downtown Seattle and the potential conflict with increased density downtown. He expressed support for Commissioner Eanes’ suggestion about a trial closure too. Commissioner Finrow reiterated that a conversation with City Council Chair Conlin would be a good place to start.

Commissioner Kay Knapton stated that, because the timing is critical, we should meet with Council Chair Conlin, Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis and others, and also express our concerns to the Mayor & City Council through a letter.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission will follow up at the Executive and LUT Committee meetings and take action by the end of the October.

- Link Light Rail Review Panel (Kevin McDonald)

Commissioner Kevin McDonald reviewed a brief history of the Commission’s involvement with the LRRP, including that two other commissioners have previously participated. He added that the LRRP is reviewing the design of the Capitol Hill and UW stations.

Commissioner McDonald indicated that the architects have been responsive to the LRRP's comments and that the designs, which recently reached 60%, are progressing quite well.

Commissioner Eanes asked about accessibility at the UW station. Commissioner McDonald answered that it has been addressed to the LRRP's satisfaction.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the status of the City Council's request to study density around the Capitol Hill Station. Commissioner McDonald indicated that Sound Transit has mandated that the station be designed to accommodate transit oriented development (TOD) under the current zoning. There was discussion among the Commissioners regarding the potentially lost opportunity and staff was directed to provide more information about the TOD opportunities at this site at a future meeting.

Commissioner Kaplan asked whether or not the Pacific interchange issue has been resolved and how the new Husky Stadium would fit in with the proposed station design. Commissioner McDonald indicated that the design accommodates many of proposed solutions for the Pacific interchange and the redevelopment and expansion plans around the stadium

- Industrial Jobs Initiative (Chris Fiori)

Vice-Chair Fiori stated that he was asked to be on the technical advisory committee for industrial and maritime jobs with OPM, OED & DPD and that a quantitative analysis is underway. He will provide further updates as appropriate.

Ms. Wilson noted that Chair Amato also recently served as a consultant for a presentation of the City's Industrial Jobs Initiative, which is the new name for the Industrial Lands work, and stated that Chair Amato will provide more information at a future meeting.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the status of people who want to flip industrial land to other zones for higher and more valuable uses. Vice-Chair Fiori indicated that is one aspect of the study currently underway. Ms. Wilson noted that there is still a lot of discussion around the issue of FAR and potentially using TDR in industrial areas. She reiterated that the City is currently evaluating edge conditions. Planning Analyst Katie Sheehy stated that City staff would present their findings to the Commission next month and toward the end of the year.

- Landmarks Preservation Board (Jerry Finrow)

Commissioner Finrow explained how different the Landmark Review Board is from the Planning Commission, particularly because their focus very specifically addresses the design of individual buildings as opposed to considering the broader context of the surrounding neighborhood or the city as a whole. He noted specifically about a project in Columbia City that is currently under review. Commissioner Finrow stated that the intersection of the guidelines and review process can be somewhat at odds with the underlying land use, which is something the Commission might want to look more closely at in the future.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if the project was on Rainier Avenue. Commissioner Finrow replied that it was. Commissioner Kaplan asked if the position was to allow it. Commissioner Finrow replied that it's in process and that they've been trying to get the architect to design a better, more responsive building, but he did not know whether or not it will succeed. He added that it's not an egregious building, but it just doesn't respond as well to the neighborhood. Commissioner Finrow noted that the

architect maintains that the property is zoned for 65 feet and that's what they get to build, which is correct, but they may not do it with the approval of the design review committee or the Landmarks Board.

- SPC Ad Hoc Multifamily committee (Tom Eanes)

Commissioner Eanes provided a brief background about the proposed Multifamily Code changes.

Ms. Wilson stated that although the draft ordinance and other materials have been published, it has not yet gone to City Council. She added that the project is scheduled to come before City Council after budget process. She added that Mike Podowski, from DPD, and Council Central staff will join us at the next full Commission meeting on September 25 to answer questions.

Commissioner Eanes indicated that at the last ad hoc committee meeting, the Commissioners decided to address these issues in separate letters as there is too much to fit into one letter. He added that in response to a question from Commissioner Hough-Beck, Commissioner Eanes noted that the Green Area Factor has been reduced to 0.6 from 0.75, but that it is still 0.6 across the board, not graduated with respect to the zone and does not vary for corner lots as recommended by the Commission. He indicated that this is one of the points the Commission could address in a letter. Commissioner Eanes noted that while, more and more project are being built with green roofs, it is not necessarily a good idea to encourage them on wood-frame buildings.

▪ **Planning Director Update**

- Welcome & Discussion with Ray Gastil, new Planning Director

Vice Chair Fiori introduced Ray Gastil., the new Planning Director for DPD.

Mr. Gastil briefly spoke about his background, noting that he was raised in Seattle. He stated that he had reviewed the Planning Commission's work plan and found many similar priorities to his own. Mr. Gastil noted that Seattle has a long history of innovative planning, which is one of the reasons he has moved back. He added that he has experience in the non-profit sector as well as the public sector from his time in NYC and indicated that people there are just as passionate about their neighborhoods as they are here. Mr. Gastil noted that the structure of the Commission is slightly different than he is used to.

Vice-Chair Fiori agreed and noted that the Commission plays an advisory role, stewards of the Comprehensive Plan, rather than a quasi-judicial one. He asked how the Commission might be helpful.

Mr. Gastil indicated that while that is an interesting question, he is not yet sure and looks forward to understanding more about how the Commission works.

Vice-Chair Fiori stated that the Commission has two committees – HNUC and LUT.

Ms. Wilson added that there is also the Executive Committee and ad hoc working groups that meet about specific issues.

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves to Mr. Gastil.

Mr. Gastil commented that he is really excited about Ms. Canzoneri's position as the demographer and noted that without information, we can't understand what we are doing. He also asked Commissioner Knapton for her perspective on the health of neighborhood business districts. Commissioner Knapton stated that she thinks they are struggling with issues of parking, attracting customers, competing with big box stores.

Mr. Gastil asked if the City has size of use limits, to which Commission Eanes responded that we do, but they are pretty big. Vice-Chair Fiori noted that there are no size of use limits in C1 zones, which is often where a conflict might arise.

Mr. Gastil thanked the Commissioners for their introductions and stated that he looks forward to working with them. He noted, in particular, that it would be great to have coordinated dialogue with Ms. Wilson, Chair Amato and Vice-Chair Fiori

Commissioner Kaplan asked what Mr. Gastil's top priorities are. Mr. Gastil indicated that he would like to take a bit more time before determining his priorities. He stated that the central waterfront, station area planning, and the larger context of neighborhood planning are projects that he intends to address. Mr. Gastil continued that more generally, he would like to focus on how to get the most out of the public realm as possible. He noted that it is heartening to see that Seattle is so eager to learn from other places. Mr. Gastil acknowledged that there is an interesting mix in terms of character of the city. He sees station area planning as an opportunity to address the character of arterials throughout the city. Mr. Gastil mentioned that, although Seattle is often lauded as a very walk able city, there are streets that just don't reflect that. He noted that he hopes to learn more about how the streets have evolved and what can be done to improve them, particularly the connections between the neighborhood centers.

Commissioner Kaplan and Vice-Chair Fiori both indicated that this fits in with the Commission's work plan particularly related to the transit hubs and corridors project and continuing concerns about the funding and planning of infrastructure.

Mr. Gastil asked about how much of the city's utilities are underground, to which Commissioners responded that very few areas – mostly just downtown and some neighborhoods where the developers did that during the initial construction of the area.

Commissioner Amalia Leighton noted that the utilities each want separate vaults, which creates a longer process, and that the utilities do not run under the streets. She added there are concerns about how the utilities are accessed on the surface.

Commissioner Eanes noted that Mr. Gastil's comments about arterials in the city was closely related to the Commission's earlier discussion about the City's propensity to do transportation planning separately from land use, specifically related to the Viaduct and Seawall replacement, which is treated as a transportation plan only. He added that the Commission has also had concerns about the lack of interdepartmental planning; many projects are clearly interdepartmental but not treated as such.

Mr. Gastil indicated that thus far he has been very impressed by SDOT staff and that they seem quite interested in what the Planning Department is doing.

Commissioner Eanes agreed that the new head of SDOT has been very good and yet still he feels that the focus is too narrow. He mentioned the transportation model for the Viaduct replacement as an example that is has no feedback to land use. Mr. Gastil indicated that he will try to look at that model.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission will have many more opportunities to talk with Mr. Gastil since he will be attending the afternoon Planning Commission meeting every month.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Chris Fiori adjourned the meeting at 5:27 pm.