



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION FEBRUARY 12, 2004 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

John Owen, Chair; George Blomberg, Vice Chair; Angela Brooks, Anjali Bhagat, Ray Connell, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Jeanne Krikawa, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan, Paul Tomita.

Commissioners Absent

Matthew Kitchen, Tony To.

Commission Staff

Marty Curry, Executive Director; Barbara Wilson, Commission Analyst.

Guests

John Rahaim, DPD City Planning; Lyle Bicknell, DPD City Planning; Kristian Koefed, DPD City Planning, Jackie Kirn, Office of Policy Development; Norm Schwab, City Council Central Staff; Bob Morgan, City Council Central Staff; Ryan Hawkes, Ben Marquez.

Call to Order

Chair John Owen called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Lyn Krizanich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mimi Sheridan, to approve the January 22, 2004 minutes as written. Motion was unanimously approved.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Sheridan introduced Ryan Hawkes whom she is mentoring through the Get Engaged program. She noted that he is interested in becoming involved on the Planning Commission's work on the Waterfront Planning project.

Planning Commission Director Marty Curry introduced Chelsea Galano who is an Urban Planning student at the University of Washington. Ms. Curry noted that Ms. Galano is interning for the Planning Commission this year and will be focused on the Commission's work on Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Connections. She has already produced several background pieces and is working with staff to organize the Pedestrian Connections workshop.

Chair's Report

New Commissioners

Chair Owen formally welcomed Angela Brooks, Tom Eanes and Jerry Finrow who were just confirmed by the City Council yesterday as new Planning Commission appointments. He noted his appreciation to all three for already jumping into Commission meetings and activities.

Upcoming Meetings

Chair Owen reminded Commissioners to review the list of upcoming meetings on the Agenda and February Calendar. Then he highlighted the following meetings:

Waterfront Environmental Forum, Tonight, 6pm at REI Conference Center

This forum is open to the public and will be useful for those participating in the Waterfront Charrette to provide more insight and information about the waterside of the Waterfront.

Northgate Open House, February 23 6:30

This Open House will include information about the new library and community center site designs along with info on the stakeholders group and on the SPC Pedestrian Connections Workshop

Waterfront Charrette, February 27– 28 All day at Bell Harbor Conference Center

Chair Owen reminded Commissioners of the Waterfront Charrette noting that several Commissioners will participate on a team and a couple will be involved as resource people, staffing the drop-in center. Barbara Wilson noted that the drop-in center needs support of Commissioners and staff both days from 1-6 pm. The drop-in center is intended to provide a place for people who are not on teams and cannot participate in the whole charrette where they can contribute ideas or feedback. She also noted that on Saturday morning there will be a report out to those interested in hearing progress reports from all of the teams. This will also be when elected officials and media are invited to stop in. Finally Ms. Wilson noted there are over 300 people signed up and about 25 teams are participating in the event.

Commissioner Krikawa offered her kudos for a well designed and written Joint Commission report on Forum's #1 and 2. This was distributed at the January 29th Charrette Orientation. Ms. Wilson noted that staff is ordering a reprint for additional distribution at the February Charrette. It will also be sent to the City Council and Mayor, accompanied by a cover letter from the two commissions.

Commissioner Sheridan stated that she recently completed a review of historical buildings at the waterfront and could likely provide a short fact sheet for charrette participants. Commissioners agreed that this would be a useful resource. Commissioner Owen asked whether she would consider being on hand for part of the event to share her knowledge and resources with the teams. She noted she could be there for a part of the time.

ACTION: Several Commissioners and SPC staff will participate in the 2-day Waterfront Charrette by participating on teams, staffing the drop-in center and providing resource materials including the Joint Commission report, a historical waterfront fact sheet, and other materials as needed.

SPC staff will work with Design Commission staff to prepare a joint cover letter to City Council and the Mayor to be signed by the chairs of the Commissions. This cover letter will accompany the Joint Commission report. SPC staff will make this report available on line and by mail.

Retreat

Chair Owen announced that the Commission's annual retreat is scheduled for March 11, in lieu of our regular full Commission meeting, but going until 7:30 p.m. We have invited Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis and DPD Director Diane Sugimura to join us for a discussion of Mayor's priorities and the Commission's work this year. We will hold the retreat at the Port of Seattle's headquarters – again thanks to George Blomberg for arranging this for us.

Chair Owen asked for additional Commissioner support in helping to plan the retreat. He asked interested Commissioners to contact staff.

Commercial Policies Focus Group

Chair Owen noted that the focus group is being delayed until early March because DPD staff want to bring the materials when they have graphics that help explain the concept. He reminded Commissioners that the whole Commission is being asked by the focus group, so we'll need to find a time that works for everyone.

Follow up on Comp Plan action from January 22 full Commission meeting

Chair Owen reported that, as requested at the last Full Commission meeting, the Executive Committee discussed the Comp Plan Update further and staff have followed up with DPD staff Tom Hauger, expressing the Commission's concerns and ideas. The Commission is helping to draft the public outreach plan, particularly identifying ways the Planning Commission will be involved.

Work Plan

Marty Curry reported that staff has prepared a more detailed work plan January – April (in Commissioners' folders). She stated she'd like to have each person review this and respond via email to herself or Ms. Wilson confirming their assignments and indicating where they want to put their primary focus and energy. This will help staff and the Executive Committee with allocating time for the next three month's activities and events. She noted the Executive Committee will be doing the time allocation for the year also, but based on a more general level of information.

Project Updates

Draft Downtown DEIS Comment Letter

Chair Owen noted that Commissioners were sent this draft letter yesterday to review for today's meeting. He also noted the comment letter is due at the end of February, so he'd like to get Commissioners overall feedback to guide staff and the small group of Commissioners who are working on this. He thanked Commissioners Eanes, Finrow, Sheridan, Connell, Krizanich and Quintana for their work thus far in the review.

Commissioner Quintana noted that it has come to his attention that he may have a conflict of interest and should recuse himself from the review. He stated his concern that as someone who works with private industry that has lots of interests in City Policy, he will need to think about how he can best participate in the Planning Commissions activities. He noted also that he believes that it would be unfortunate to lose such perspectives in such debate at the Commission.

Commissioner Krizanich stated that she will also recuse herself. Although she wears many hats and is involved in the neighborhood group and is a resident of downtown she also works for Clise Properties who is a significant property holder in the area being studied in the DEIS. She then invited Commissioners to the Clise office to look at its proposal for development of its Denny Triangle properties.

ACTION: Commissioners will review the draft DEIS letter and provide comments to the staff by next Tuesday (February 17). Additional Commissioners may be called upon to review sections of the DEIS if needed before final comment letter is submitted to the City of Seattle on February 29th.

ACTION: Conflict of Interest: Chair Owen will work with staff and others to review the Planning Commission bylaws and consult where appropriate on the appearance of fairness and conflict of interest questions for a clearer determination.

Housing Choices

Chair John Owen reported that the Planning Commission has been asked to brief Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck's Urban Development and Planning Committee on February 25, 2:00 p.m. on the Commission's Housing Choices report from 2003. Chair Owen reminded the Commission that we briefed the full Council last August, but the initiative was slowed down by a challenge to the DNS and Council did not take any further action in 2003. He also noted that Councilmember Steinbrueck is getting this back on the agenda, beginning with this requested briefing by the Planning Commission. Commissioners who did the earlier briefing are being asked to participate (Owen, To). He also asked if new Commissioner Tom Eanes might also be able to participate.

ACTION: The Planning Commission will brief Councilmember the Urban Development and Planning Committee on February 25, 2:00 p.m. on the Commission's Housing Choices report from 2003. Commissioners Owen, To, and Eanes will participate in this briefing.

PRESENTATIONS

Monthly DPD Planning Director Report

Chair John Owen welcomed John Rahaim to the Planning Commission for his monthly report and introduced the new Commissioners. Mr. Rahaim greeted the Commission and stated he had much to report on. He shared with Commissioner that he has been busy working with the Planning Division team to create the organizational structure including a vision, mission and way of organizing to become the City's primary planning entity. He shared the results of 3 half-day staff planning retreats including the mission statement of the division. The group will be named "City Planning". Mr. Rahaim is working with the managers to come up with a staffing plan and structure that will allow the group to accomplish its work plan, but also reflected that there is more work than staff capacity at this point. He reported that the Planning Division will soon be hiring for several positions that were frozen in 2003 including the urban design lead and an outreach position. He is currently grappling with sorting out Administration priorities with Division resources.

Mr. Rahaim then discussed some of the large tasks and projects on City Planning's work plan that he would advise the Planning Commission to pay particular attention to. These include; 1) Comp Plan Update, 2) the emerging concept of a Center City strategy which includes 10 neighborhoods and includes all the downtown neighborhoods and those neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, 3) continued work on the Waterfront Planning, 4) the newly renamed Neighborhood Business District Strategy. This is in addition to Northgate, Monorail, Light Rail, Viaduct, etc.

Mr. Rahaim asked Commissioners for comment, input and feedback. Commissioner Krizanich asked if there was a change in scope or just a clarity and message issue in changing the Commercial Policies and Code Review Project to the Neighborhood Business District strategy. Mr. Rahaim stated that the name better describes the scope of the project and will be easier to understand. Commissioner Bloomberg asked what the expectation for legislation is for this project and what the status of the project is. Mr. Rahaim noted that legislation is intended to go to Council by the end of the year. He also noted that the Concept plan is to be finalized as a Comp Plan policy amendment and will go through a series of public input activities to be refined and allow for broader feedback. Commissioner Owen encouraged that the public participation process be opened up quickly. Commissioner Finrow recommended that the City establish a clear role for the neighborhoods and stated it will require leadership.

Commissioner Bloomberg asked about the Center City concept and the notion of 10 neighborhoods and how something like this would be scoped. Mr. Rahaim noted that the City is trying to build on a lot of things that are already happening and trying to connect them in a logical way. These include the efforts to produce more housing in South Lake Union and Pioneer Square and how we can build those efforts not as competition but as two complementary yet unique communities that are both downtown. It also focuses on transportation and infrastructure issues comprehensively and strategically.

Commissioner Finrow noted that the overarching political structure of bringing together these 10 neighborhoods will be an important consideration with an overarching goal of getting neighborhoods to work together and to buy into the Center City concept. Mr. Rahaim acknowledged that this is an important consideration and that there has been some smaller version of such a cooperative effort in the Downtown District Council. This would broaden the scope by looking at neighborhoods that connect to downtown but are not in the downtown. Chair Owen stated he believed it was an interesting approach.

Commissioner Bloomberg also asked about Mr. Rahaim's impression of the Industrial Lands and jobs policies and how they relate to Neighborhood Business District strategies and the Center City strategy. Chair Owen noted that he had just met with DPD Director Diane Sugimura and specially discussed the industrial lands issues. He noted that we know very little about the economic data especially in making decisions. Commissioner Sheridan noted that there is indeed a lot of vacant land in the industrial area and there is a need to get a better understanding through analysis of why this is occurring. Commissioner Finrow stated that although he is not familiar with the details of the study, a study completed several years ago by Bob Filly at the UW may provide a place to start. He also recommended that this issue be viewed from a regional perspective.

Commissioner Owen also noted that the 520 corridor is a potentially huge issue that DPD should also be tracking and will have some major impacts on neighborhoods. He noted that the EIS will come out in March. Mr. Rahaim concurred that this was indeed a big issue to track.

Chair Owen thanked Mr. Rahaim for the opportunity to give feedback on City Planning, its focus and work plan.

Northgate Update

Chair Owen asked John Rahaim to stay to participate in this discussion and also invited Jackie Kirn, Kristian Koefed, and Lyle Bicknell to join Commission at the table. Marty Curry referred Commissioners to the one page outline in their packets and noted the purpose of this update is to lay out more specifically the tasks that the Planning Commission will be engaging in over the next several months in the actions directed by the Council Resolution. Ms. Curry also noted that the Commission's Northgate subcommittee has met and begun initial planning efforts for the Commission sponsored Pedestrian Connections Workshops. This workshop will likely be held March 25, 27, or 30th. The subcommittee is

also beginning to address the other project areas where the Planning Commission will have a role in the Northgate Plan, specifically the convening the Northgate Stakeholder Group, Open Space and Pedestrian Connections plan, the CTIP and the Area-wide Analysis.

Jackie Kirn passed out the stakeholder group nomination forms and asked the Commissioners to consider nominating people. She noted the stakeholders group will likely hold its first meeting the week before the Commissions Pedestrian Connections workshop so it will be a well timed event.

Commissioner Sheridan noted that the Commission's Northgate Subcommittee is planning to focus the Pedestrian Connections workshop on pedestrian issues rather than getting into open space issues and wants the focus to remain there. Ms. Kirn agreed that it should be an exercise in connectivity. Kristian Koefed concurred that open space is only a piece of connectivity to community destinations, some of which the City is aware and others that the workshop will bring to light. Ms. Sheridan stated that a goal is to discover where people go and where they'd like to go but don't due to poor pedestrian quality. Commissioner Owen stated that the transit hub should be considered. He also noted that SDOT's approach has been cars first and we want to change that in some places and begin to put pedestrians first. Commissioner Finrow noted that in traditional pedestrian design strategies it is important to make sure the study area is broad enough. Others concurred with this assessment.

ACTION:

The Planning Commission will host a late March Pedestrian Connections workshop. SPC will also have an advisory role in crafting the Open Space & Pedestrian Plan, the Comprehensive Transportation Investment Plan and the Area Wide Analysis. Additionally the Planning Commission will continue to be involved in the formation and convening of the Northgate Stakeholders Group.

Public Comment

There was no public comment

Adjourn Meeting

Chair Owen adjourned the meeting at 5:05 pm