



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

May 13, 2004

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

John Owen, Chair; Anjali Bhagat, Angela Brooks, Ray Connell, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Matthew Kitchen, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Paul Tomita, Tony To.

Commissioners Absent

George Blomberg, Vice Chair; Jeanne Krikawa, Mimi Sheridan, Steve Sheehy, Mahlon Clements.

Commission Staff

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

Guests

Seattle City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck; Neil Powers, City Council staff; John Rahaim, Planning Director, DPD City Planning; Tom Hauger, DPD City Planning; Lish Whitson, DPD City Planning; Jim Holmes, DPD Planning; Bob Morgon, City Council Central Staff.

Call to Order

Chair John Owen called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Tom Eanes made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Jerry Finrow, to approve the April 22, 2004 Commission minutes. The motion was to accept the April 22 minutes.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chair's Report

Nominating Committee Report

Chair Owen asked Commissioner Krizanich to give the Nominating Committee's report for the 2004 Planning Commission officers. Commissioner Krizanich reported that the committee met and considered all of the nominations submitted by Commissioners. They then contacted and confirmed that nominees were willing to serve. She announced the slate of candidates: George Blomberg, Chair; Steve Sheehy, Vice Chair; Jeanne Krikawa, At-Large Executive Committee representative; Matthew Kitchen, Transportation Committee Chair; (with Anjali Bhagat, Transportation Committee Vice Chair); Jerry Finrow, Chair of the Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee. The Committee also recommends that John Owen serve on the Executive Committee in the Chair Emeritus position. Commissioner Krizanich asked for further discussion. Several Commissioners noted this was a very

good slate of candidates. Commissioner Krizanich reminded Commissioners that they will formally vote on the slate at the May 27 Commission meeting. Director Marty Curry reminded Commissioners that they can make nominations from the floor at this time or may submit additional nominations between now and the May 27 meeting. She noted that new officers will begin their terms in June.

Executive Director Selection Process

Chair Owen reported that the Executive Committee is working with Commission Director, Marty Curry and Commission Analyst, Barbara Wilson on the schedule and process for hiring the new Executive Director. He reported that the deadline for applications is May 25th. A rating panel will screen and select applicants to be interviewed. The first round of interviews are tentatively scheduled June 4 – 8, with the final candidates potentially interviewing with the full Commission at the June 10 meeting. Final candidates will also meet with DPD Director Diane Sugimura and Planning Director John Rahaim. The Commission will make the final decision with their input. If this schedule can be followed, it is possible that the new person could begin June 30 or early July.

In response to Chair Owen's request for volunteers to help with the selection process, Commissioners Owen, Krizanich, Bhagat and Finrow all volunteered to participate in the selection and/or interview team

Chair Owen asked for input on the selection/rating criteria and on interview questions. Commissioner Krizanich suggested that staff draft some initial rating criteria and interview questions for review by the Executive Committee at their next meeting.

Upcoming Activities

Chair Owen noted many upcoming events and activities that the Commission is participating in. He specifically noted the Neighborhood Business District Strategy meetings in June and end of May deadlines for comments on the Comp Plan Amendments and the Alaskan Way Viaduct DEIS.

Presentation by Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck

Chair Owen welcomed Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck and thanked him for attending. He then invited Councilmember Steinbrueck to share with the Commission his thoughts about planning projects and issues that the Council is dealing with and how the Commission can assist in these issues.

Councilmember Steinbrueck started the discussion by stating that he appreciated the work of the Monorail Review Panel and the Planning Commission's role in it. He asked who on the Planning Commission was currently a member of MRP. Paul Tomita stated that he along with Steve Sheehy and Mimi Sheridan comprised the Planning Commission representatives on the MRP. Councilmember Steinbrueck noted he had heard that there was discussion circulating about the role and value of MRP and that he wanted to assure the Commission that he greatly appreciated and valued the hard work of the Panel. He also stated that MRP has a lot of support on the Council and that most councilmembers value the broad expertise and the critical and objective review that the MRP brings to the process.

Councilmember Steinbrueck noted that growth management issues like the Comp Plan Update, the Downtown Height and Density proposal as well as the work on Northgate are efforts the Planning Commission is intimately involved in as well as high priority for issues him. He noted that with both the Comp Plan Update and Downtown Height and Density legislation, he is interested in indicators that better measure the quality of health of the community. He wants to see better strategies for increasing density and dealing effectively with the job/housing imbalance through the Comp Plan process. He noted that the Downtown Height and Density study revealed that there are 10 times as many jobs as housing units in downtown and he would like to take a closer look at how to provide more housing.

Councilmember Steinbrueck reported that the Northgate efforts are on track and he credited the Planning Commission for the fine work it has done, especially its work last fall helping the Council and Mayor find ways to work together and move forward. He acknowledged the Commission's value as a crucial convener and objective advisor for the multiple interests at Northgate. He noted that there seems to be a great deal of stakeholder consensus on the issues of the creek. He applauded that the community was able to work with SPU to craft a preferred alternative that is a hybrid approach to the issues.

Chair Owen then opened the floor for discussion. He stated that he would like input from Councilmember Steinbrueck regarding his thinking on the Detached ADU (DADU) legislation. Chair Owen noted that the Planning Commission has been very active on this issue and reminded CM Steinbrueck that the Planning Commission sponsored a public involvement effort in 2003 that included three focus groups, a survey and a public workshop. This work was presented to Council in July, 2003 and again in February, 2004 to the Urban Development and Planning Committee.

Councilmember Steinbrueck reported that the Detached ADU legislation has not been submitted to him at this point. He also noted that there is vocal opposition to detached ADU's and a lack of visible support. Chair Owen observed that in the Planning Commission's public involvement efforts it appeared that the supporters of DADU's do not appear to be an organized constituency. He stated the biggest supporters were younger homeowners and older folks who are concerned about housing affordability and see DADU's as a potential mechanism for homeownership.

Commissioner Tony To pointed out that these housing choices need to be viewed as both growth management and housing affordability issues. He noted that in places like Beacon Hill and the Rainer Valley this type of housing option would offer more affordability and more flexibility for a needed housing type. Councilmember Steinbrueck noted that he does favor housing choices and detached ADU's and is interested in looking for a solution that will have political support. He stated that he would support starting with neighborhoods that have shown a willingness for this type of housing. Commissioner Lyn Krizanich noted that the Commission is happy to continue exploring solutions that will enable the City to offer needed housing choices that address the needs of the changing demographics of the City of Seattle.

Commissioner Paul Tomita asked Councilmember Steinbrueck to talk more about the Council process on the Monorail alignment and transit way agreement decisions, and their plans for addressing segment review and policy review. Councilmember Steinbrueck stated his concern that the Council is being provided with incomplete and poorly presented information and that the diagrams and visuals are of poor quality. He stated that this needs to be addressed in order for the Council to meet the fast track schedule and that he is committed to giving this project the proper diligence that will ensure it works for Seattle. He noted there are a lot of impacts and risks for the City that need to be addressed. He also noted he was concerned about the Monorail being constructed over downtown sidewalks, and stated that pedestrian sidewalks need to be valued in multiple ways. For instance, he noted that pedestrian quality has economic impacts for the downtown business district. He noted that some of the design decisions will be deferred to design review. Commissioner Owen stated that the Commission has made recommendations and advice about ways the Council can deal with unknowns through conditional and partial approval strategies.

Councilmember Steinbrueck thanked the Commission for its hard work and noted that expert and objective advice from the Planning Commission has really added a lot to the discussion and enabled progress on several tough issues over the past year. He offered his thanks and appreciation.

The Commission spent a few minutes debriefing after Councilmember Steinbrueck's presentation. They specifically addressed the issue of Detached ADU's. Chair Owen noted that both the Commission and

the City have invested a lot of time in the last few years working with the community. He noted he would like to see the effort continue moving forward.

ACTION: Commissioner Joe Quintana made a motion that the Planning Commission draft a letter to the Mayor to move forward with the DADU legislation, applying it on a limited geographic basis. The Commission should emphasize that although the politics may be difficult, it is the right thing to do from a policy perspective by furthering the goals of growth management and providing greater access to housing choices and affordability. Jerry Finrow seconded and the motion was approved with unanimous support.

Commissioner Spotlight Jerry Finrow

The Commissioner Spotlight for Jerry Finrow was delayed until the May 27th Commission meeting.

Comp Plan Amendments – Commission Review

Chair Owen asked Tom Hauger, Lish Whitson and Jim Holmes from DPD City Planning to join the Commission at the table for discussion of the Commission's review of the Comp Plan Update. Staff Barbara Wilson reviewed the compilation of comments from Commissioners to date. She also reiterated the timeline and work plan for producing the Commission's comments/letter to DPD. The Commission discussed comments, with individual Commissioners highlighting the sections that they reviewed and the Commission discussing key points and questions, noting where there is still need for more review and input.

Commissioners Finrow noted that the staff has done an outstanding job in preparing the recommended updates for the Comp. Plan. He also mentioned that the staff were complimented at the two public sessions that he moderated for the update work and the format of the update, which allows good transparency for public review. He noted that his comments are minor. Commissioner Quintana suggested that the economic indicators needed to be expanded to include things like the wage levels, the diversity of employment and the health of the tax base. Commissioner Finrow added that the public facility planning needs a clearer statement.

Commissioner Kitchen suggested that the Transportation Element could still benefit by being tightened up and made more concise. Commissioner Owen noted that without knowing more detail about the TSP it is difficult to see where and how things that were moved out of the Comp Plan and into the TSP were dealt with. Commissioner Bhagat noted that the mode split matrix goals and parking requirements need clarity. Commissioner Kitchen questioned whether or not the mode splits are actually measurable and useful. Commissioner Quintana noted that he is not particularly concerned about congestion for personal mobility as much as he is concerned about economic development impacts. He noted that our region has a great opportunity to increase our economic sustainability with increased freight activities.

Commissioner Eanes noted that the Housing estimates for South lake Union in the Urban Village needed more explanation. Commissioner Finrow stated that where increased housing is being planned we have to do a better job getting at the City's goals for providing public facilities and services such as libraries, public open space and community centers. Commissioner Eanes also noted that streets are still the primary mode of pedestrian movement in Seattle and that the pedestrian environment is poor in a number of areas slated for substantial growth.

Commissioner Owen noted that the Precautionary Principle must be put into clearer language for the public and that the indicators need to be tangible. Bob Morgan, Council Central staff, noted that

proponents were concerned about the legal issues with more detailed language. Commissioner Finrow stated he was concerned that without more clarity or a better understanding of the consequences this principle could be used to stop good projects.

Commissioner Kitchen noted that overall the document still needs a better way to pare it down and include a hierarchy of priorities. He recommended that staff continue to strive to be even more concise. Ms. Curry suggested that the plan may be able to have 15 or so framework policies that everything else fits into. Commissioner Tomita stated that a strong organizational framework with a hierarchy would help use of this document in decision-making.

Action: The Planning Commission will complete its review of the Comp Plan 10-year update and will provide staff with comments by the May 28 deadline. The Commission will also provide the Council and Mayor with the a summary of their review including comments on the Council's proposed amendments.

DPD Planning Director Report

Chair Owen welcomed John Rahaim and invited him to share his monthly report with the Commission. Mr. Rahaim shared that he was pleased with the direction of the Northgate Open Space/Pedestrian Connections Plan and especially the Planning Commission's contributions from the public workshop. He noted that the Commission's work has really helped to ensure that pedestrian policies will have the predominance it should in the Comprehensive Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP). He also noted that in general he was optimistic about the progress being made in Northgate with the Stakeholders Group and noted that the Hybrid option for the South Lot Stormwater/Thornton Creek issue seemed to be very positively received by the stakeholders.

Mr. Rahaim reported that he has put thought into the Planning Commission's role in Center City strategy and has discussed some ideas with Director Marty Curry. He asked the Commission to consider convening a group of key City staff to help develop a more detailed definition and scope for the Center city concept by thinking through the key issues and what it will mean for neighborhood plans and City policies. Commissioners responded with a number of ideas regarding issues related to Center City.

Action: The Commission agreed to take a leadership role in helping the City define and develop a Center City Strategy. They will begin by convening a group of City staff to help with the development of a scope, considering key issues and what it will mean for neighborhood plans and City policies. Commissioner Owen offered to take a leadership role in the Commission's involvement in this effort.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Chair Owen adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm