



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION July 8, 2004 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

George Blomberg, Chair; Ray Connell, Tom Eanes, Matthew Kitchen, Lyn Krizanich, John Owen, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To.

Commissioners Absent

Angali Bhagat, Angela Brooks, Mahlon Clements, Jerry Finrow, Jeanne Krikawa, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy, Paul Tomita.

Commission Staff

Marty Curry, Director; Barbara Wilson, Analyst

Guests

Don Blakeney, DPD; Scott McColl, Council Staff

Call to Order

Chair George Blomberg called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Introduction/Discussion With Guillermo Romano, CityDesign Director

Chair George Blomberg welcomed Guillermo Romano, newly hired Executive Director of City Design and the Design Commission. Mr. Romano expressed his pleasure in taking on this position and noted that he will be working on the Waterfront planning process. He also has a strong interest in Northgate and will help complete the Planning Division's work on the Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Circulation plan.

Mr. Romano shared his concern about budget cuts and how they will affect the capacity of CityDesign and the Design Commission. He also noted that the Design Commission is currently providing input on the Public Safety Building issue, one that has a history of involvement from both the Design and Planning Commissions. Finally he stated his interest in learning more about how the Planning Commission and Design Commissions work together, complementing one another while retaining their different charges and perspectives.

Commissioners explained more about the Planning Commission, noting that it has led public participation processes on Planning Division issues such as Housing Choice, has at times been out front on issues and at others played a review function.

Chair Blomberg thanked Mr. Romano for coming and stated the Commission's ongoing commitment to work collaboratively with the Design Commission and CityDesign on areas of shared interest.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Eanes moved and Commissioner Kitchen seconded to approve the June 24, 2004 Commission minutes as written. The motion to accept the minutes were approved unanimously.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chair's Report

- **Upcoming and Recent Activities**

Chair Blomberg thanked Commissioners who attended the recent Monorail station area planning workshops and the Neighborhood Business District Strategy workshops. He also reminded Commissioners of the farewell party Commissioners are having for Marty Curry, scheduled for July 15 after work.

- **Executive Director Hiring Process**

Chair Blomberg updated Commissioners on the selection process, noting that two additional candidates have been interviewed and are recommended to the full Commission for interviews. These interviews are scheduled for Tuesday, July 13, immediately following the Executive Committee meeting. He also reported that Barbara will be taking on most director functions on an interim basis after Marty formally leaves the position (July 13), for the next several weeks or few months depending on when the position is permanently filled.

- **Commissioner Spotlight**

Chair Blomberg requested that the spotlight by Tom Eanes be delayed because of the need to spend most of this meeting on the Commission's discussion of their position on a preferred alternative for the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Commissioner Eanes concurred, noting he would like to do his spotlight when more Commissioners are here, and agreed that today's time should be spent on this more immediate task.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Marty Curry reported that Planning Commission and Design Commission representatives will be meeting with Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis on July 21 and with City Council's Committee of the Whole on July 26 to share their positions/comments on preferred alternatives. Both Commission's are preparing a position on their preferred alternative to be shared in these briefings.

Commissioner Lyn Krizanich asked for clarification on the possibility of a Supplemental EIS; Commissioner Matthew Kitchen verified that a Supplemental EIS is likely, particularly to address possible closure of the corridor during construction.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Blomberg noted that the Commission found documentation in the DEIS poor, and agreed with Commissioner Kitchen's concern about making recommendations about selecting a preferred alternative with missing analysis and information. Commissioner Kitchen stated his concern about the lack of operational analysis. Others shared the concern about the inadequacy of analysis in the DEIS and agreed that the Commission should encourage additional analysis on the effects on the regional economy and local and regional transportation systems. Commissioner Blomberg noted that with more thorough analysis, the selected alternative can have better success in being funded.

Commissioner Owen stated his belief that we do have enough information to make a recommendation, but that more analysis will be required before a final decision is made by state and local officials. He noted that the Commission should base its recommendation on the planning criteria it developed some time ago. He also stated his strong contention that putting traffic on surface streets and I-5 would degrade transportation and would compromise the urban environment. Commissioner Eanes agreed with this assessment, noting that routing more traffic on 4th Avenue through Belltown would degrade the desired residential environment even more than with the current one-way movement of traffic through Belltown. He stated his reluctance in supporting a decision to channel more traffic to downtown streets and noted that this is more than an operational issue – it affects the overall quality of life for downtown residential community.

Commissioner Blomberg posed a concern that the decision on a preferred alternative will be made with linked actions (especially related to access and linkages and improvements to the environment), but that funding problems might result in the linked actions being dropped. This would pose a danger to the overall viability of the project. Consequently, he suggested the Commission recommend that the City identify the conditions that must be met or included in the preferred alternative as part of the core project. In response to Commissioner Kitchen's concern about adequate funding for the project, Commissioner Blomberg suggested that the Commission define what it wants to see in the preferred alternative and what should (or should not) be cut if less funding is available.

Commissioner Owen proposed that the Commission make a stronger statement to not go to the surface alternative and to include a strong statement about the decision-making process and funding. Commissioner Tony To stated that the DEIS

has only scratched the surface on funding and noted that more work will need to be done to explore a broader range of funding possibilities. He also stated that the Commission needs to draw a distinction regarding its role – it needs to give advice on what is a reasonably preferred alternative based on our role as planners and citizen advisors. The Commission should make a recommendation given what we know and what we are trying to do in planning for the future of the waterfront, downtown and to create an effective transportation network.

Chair Blomberg asked the Commission to consider its position and rationale. He suggested that the Commission state that it recognizes that its position is based on the EIS – noting the constraints inherent in the range of alternatives.

Commissioner To stated that from a planning perspective he advocates that the Commission support a full tunnel option. Since the alternatives are contrived for the purposes of the environmental assessment, it is possible to consider some different features in that full tunnel alternative. He also raised the question of whether there is a cheaper, safer, low-impact option that has not been considered. Commissioner Kitchen noted that from WSDOT's perspective this is a preservation project so it is not looking at a full range of alternatives that would not achieve this intent.

Commissioner Blomberg reminded Commissioners that they should look far ahead at the vision for the waterfront, the city and region in recommending a preferred alternative. What is achieved may be worth the marginal difference in cost when viewed from a long term perspective. Commissioner Owen reiterated his desire for the Commission's position paper to state the importance to have a plan for how the decisions will be made (structural), and how the project will be funded (financial).

Chair Blomberg summarized the Commission's discussion and asked that staff prepare a draft position paper for discussion by the Executive Committee at their July 13 meeting. A revised version would then be sent to all Commissioners for review. Staff noted that this paper should be finalized by July 16 or 19 to allow time for the Commission's representatives (Blomberg and Tomita) to prepare for the July 21 and 26 briefings.

Staff also noted that Council will be hearing from the People's Waterfront Coalition and other groups that want different alternatives considered at a COW on July 19. This will be instructive to hear more from these groups and to see what questions the Council has on their proposals.

Action: Commissioners directed staff to prepare a position paper reflecting the key points raised today. The Commission support in general a full tunnel alternative, but has advice and a number of caveats to the Mayor and Council regarding issues/features that the City should advocate for in their negotiations. A revised position paper will be sent to all Commissioners for final review/approval after it is considered by the Executive Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cary Moon, representing the People's Waterfront Coalition voiced support for concerns Commissioners brought up regarding the need for more thorough analysis of impacts. She noted that the Coalition does not believe there is enough data and analysis to make a decision on an alternative. She urged the Commission to join the Coalition in calling for a Supplemental EIS and for consideration of a 6th Alternative that would not replace the Viaduct with another highway, but would better utilize the existing transportation network and focus more on multi-modal capacity. She noted that this alternative focuses on transportation, ecology and urban life.

Adjournment

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.