



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 23, 2019
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Veronica Guenther, Grace Kim, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Michael Austin, Rick Mohler, Kelly Rider, Lauren Squires

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst

Guests: Nathan Torgelson, Director, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Vice-Chair Patti Wilma called the meeting to order at 7:35 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner Sandra Fried moved to approve the May 9, 2019 meeting minutes. Commissioner David Goldberg seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events including an Equitable Development Initiative fund technical workshop, a Mt. Baker Station Area Transit-Oriented Development Technical Assistance Panel briefing, the Seattle Design Commission 50th anniversary celebration, and two upcoming 130th/145th Station Area Planning meetings. She reminded the Commissioners of the annual retreat on June 13th. She announced that the City Council has appointed/reappointed Al Levine, Jamie Stroble, and Amy Shumann to serve.

Briefing: 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, introduced the proposed 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan amendments. He provided an overview of the annual amendment cycle and the process by which proposed amendments are reviewed for inclusion on the docket for further analysis. This docketing process uses a series of criteria established by City Council Resolution 31807 to determine whether the proposed amendments should move forward. After the Council adopts a docket resolution, the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) will review the proposed amendments. The Planning Commission will review the OPCD analysis and provide recommendations to the City Council in 2020.

The City Council received fourteen amendment applications for the 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan amendment process. These included five proposed amendments to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and nine proposed amendments to the text of the Plan. Mr. Hoey reviewed each of the fourteen amendments, including a brief description, map (if applicable), whether they have been submitted before, and whether they have previously been docketed. The Commission will review the staff draft recommendations on June 27 and take action on its final recommendations on July 11.

If you would like to view the 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan Amendments presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked whether those amendment proposals that were submitted late should be treated differently. Executive Director Murdock replied by saying the late submissions were not so late that it prevented the Commission from providing recommendations to the Council by July 11th.
- Commissioners asked for clarification on the zoning around Amendment #12's proposed FLUM change. Staff will follow up and provide additional information about the zoning around that parcel.
- Commissioners inquired about the status of other issues related to the Comprehensive Plan that are being addressed through separate Resolutions. Executive Director Murdock stated the City Council has already requested that OPCD review a number of these issues. Staff will track OPCD's review and report on any issues that warrant the Commission's attention.

Update: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Nathan Torgelson, Director, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Mr. Torgelson stated that the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) had another record year for total permits processed for intake and issuance. 55,055 total permits were processed for intake and 53,834 permits were issued. SDCI has had a strong year of building development project valuation for both intake and issuance, with \$3.99 billion of project intake for construction permits, better than the \$3.7 billion forecast for the year, and \$3.420 billion in issuance valuation. SDCI has received 7,200 building permit applications and has issued 6,600 permits. 954 Master Use Permit (MUP) applications have been received with 679 of those issued for a total of 7,821 net new units. SDCI has received \$11.2 million in Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) payments from eleven development projects. Those projects were all subject to the MHA requirements before the Citywide MHA legislation

passed. The MHA payment fees are collected upon issuance of the building permits. SDCI's code compliance division received 9,821 total complaints, with the majority of those in construction (1,568), zoning (2,457), landlord/tenant (1,765), and weeds (1,683).

There are several major projects currently under review by SDCI. The Seattle Center Arena project was recently issued a shoring and excavation permit. Redevelopment of the Northgate Mall is underway. Simon Property Group is planning 1200 new residential units as well as a new practice facility for the NHL Seattle hockey team. SDCI recently issued a demolition permit for the Macy's building at Northgate. The hockey facility is planned for completion in June 2021. SDCI is working with Sound transit on a permitting plan for its West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project. Director Torgelson acknowledged the recent crane collapse at the Google building construction site. The Washington State Department of Labor & Industry regulates cranes and is conducting an investigation. Former Deputy Director Alan Justad was tragically killed in the accident.

SDCI is working with the National Development Council on a strategy to address the large number of unreinforced masonry buildings citywide. Many of these buildings provide affordable residential and commercial space, but the buildings are extremely vulnerable. SDCI launched the Renting in Seattle website in December. The new vacant building monitoring program will be effective on June 1. All vacant buildings in the city, including those waiting for a permit, will be monitored. There will be a fee for building owners. SDCI's permit tracking software, Accela, has been active for one year, with many complications. SDCI has invested more than \$3 million with Seattle IT to address these challenges. SDCI will be hiring thirteen additional land use planners to help with permit backlog.

SDCI has been working with the Mayor's small business task force and middle-income advisory committee to speed up permitting times. Department staff recently met with downtown residents to help them navigate the permit tracking system. SDCI is working with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs on creating a language line to access an interpreter when necessary. SDCI recently held two home fairs, one each in north Seattle and south Seattle. They were very successful and attracted many people of color. Information sessions included landslide risk, seismic retrofits, and accessory and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs and DADUs). The Washington state legislature made some significant changes to tenant-landlord laws. The new law requires 14 days' notice before a tenant can default on rent and 60 days' notice before a landlord can increase rents. SDCI recently received a Green Award from the Master Builders Association. Jess Harris was recognized for the Priority Green program.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked how 2019 permit numbers look so far. Director Torgelson replied that early numbers indicate a strong year. There are a lot of permits in the system. As long as Seattle keeps adding jobs, SDCI will continue seeing permits.
- Commissioners asked how many MHA units have been built under the performance option instead of developers making in-lieu payments. Director Torgelson stated that eleven projects contributed \$11.2 million to the City for MHA in 2018. All these projects chose the payment over performance option. There isn't a unit count since those funds become part of the money the Office of Housing

awards to non-profit affordable housing developers for specific projects. Those developers co-mingle that money with many other different sources.

- Commissioners asked what steps are being taken to pre-approve ADUs. Director Torgelson said staff is working on how to fast track these units, including pre-approved plans, through the permitting process.
- Commissioners requested an update on the new design review process. Director Torgelson stated the early community outreach program through the Department of Neighborhoods has been going well. Some members of the development community don't appreciate that process as they were already doing that on their own. However, some had not been conducting any outreach. The changes have been positive, including a limit on the number of design review meetings.
- Commissioners requested clarification on the definition of a vacant building. Director Torgelson stated a vacant building is one that is not currently occupied. If a landlord is actively trying to rent it out, it may not be considered vacant. The City is working with Mary's Place and Weld to use vacant buildings as short-term housing. Commissioners mentioned sometimes vacant building owners do everything in their control but still have issues such as squatting. Director Torgelson stated SDCI has sometimes allowed demolition of a vacant building before issuance of MUP if there are severe public safety issues. Recent examples include the King 5 building and the Seattle Times printing press building. Those had been a drain on public resources, as they required excessive police and fire department attention.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am.