



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION APRIL 13, 2006 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Linda Amato, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Valerie Kinast, Kay Knapton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Kirsten Pennington, Carl See

Commissioners Absent

Steve Sheehy - Chair, Martin Kaplan, Tony To

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson – Director, Scott Dvorak – Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil – Admin Assistant

Guests

Council President Nick Licata, Seattle City Council; John Rahaim, DPD City Planning; Lish Whitson, Roque Deherrera, and Josh Miller from DPD; Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff, Piper Marckx

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:07 pm by Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- March 23, 2006 Minutes Approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kevin McDonald moved that the March 23, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Valerie Kinast seconded the approval. The motion passed unanimously.

- Chair Report

- Welcome New Commissioners

Vice-Chair Finrow moved this to later in the meeting.

- Upcoming Events and Meetings

Vice-Chair Finrow called special attention to the upcoming Executive Committee meeting on April 18; the Land Use & Transportation Meeting on April 20 which will be a work session for the Joint Design Commission/Planning Commission editorial on the Viaduct and discussing possible Commission-

sponsored Viaduct education in addition to drafting a work plan on developing an Industrial Lands strategy. Vice-Chair Finrow reminded the Commissioners that the next full commission meeting, schedule for April 27th from 7:30 – 9:00 a.m. is canceled. Instead we will hold our Annual retreat that same day from 3 pm to 7:30 at the Port of Seattle.

– **Announcements and Reports**

Vice-Chair Finrow thanked the Commissioners who helped facilitate the South Lake Union Urban Center Plan meeting last week – Jerry Finrow, George Blomberg, Valerie Kinast, and Chris Fiori. He noted that he and George presented the Planning Commission’s 2006 Comp Plan Amendment Threshold resolution recommendations at last night’s UDP Public Hearings. Councilmember Steinbrueck asked if the Commission would return to the UDP committee on April 20th. We will ask for volunteers to attend that meeting next Wednesday afternoon.

Scott Dvorak reported on the Multi-Family Code Rewrite Project noting that the Planning Commission will co-sponsor the project’s Open House on Wednesday, May 3, from 5:30pm – 8:30pm at City Hall in the Bertha Knight Landes Room. Vice-Chair Finrow encouraged Commissioners to attend and asked for specific volunteers. At this point, Commissioners Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald and Valerie Kinast volunteered.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson gave an update on the ethics legislation. Ms. Wilson reminded the Commissioners that they had been asked by the Mayor’s office to submit an advisory opinion request to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC). This was done on January 31st via letter with 14 or so scenarios that the Commission asked the SEEC to weigh in on. Their response was delivered this week and Ms. Wilson reported that it is very clear in some cases and overall that the current ethics regulations could have a chilling effect on the Commission’s ability to have members that know the most about particular issues speak to those issues. She noted that the advisory opinion does make a clear case for the need for legislation. The Mayor’s office is working with an ad hoc group of advisory boards and commissions plus good government groups in putting together legislation that not only removes financial penalties but will create a new definition in the code for advisory bodies. Ms. Wilson added that the one issue that the Commission is trying to still work out is the prohibitive conduct rules while Commissioners are serving. This is one of the hardest issues to find an answer to. She noted that the impact of this section is possibly the most concerning to the Planning Commission. Vice-Chair Finrow requested that at the retreat we spend some time going over the ethics issue in more detail for the benefit of the new Commissioners. He added that it might be useful to read the City’s policy regarding conflict of interest.

Commissioner Tom Eanes asked that since the moratorium is scheduled to expire to in a couple of weeks, what was the possibility that the legislation would go through prior to the moratorium expiration. Ms. Wilson responded that it was unlikely that we would get legislation through in that time frame but she has asked that the Mayor’s office get it down to Council in the next week or so and keep it moving. She added that this will show the SEEC that progress is being made and that may encourage them to extend the moratorium.

Vice-Chair Finrow stated that the Introduction to the New Commissioners would be deferred until the Planning Commission retreat due to the number of presentations scheduled for this meeting.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

▪ Discussion – Council President Nick Licata

Vice-Chair Finrow welcomed Council President Nick Licata to the Planning Commission. Mr. Finrow noted that the Commission was very interested in his vision as President of the Council and is especially interested in how the Planning Commission can play into that vision and how we can help the Council move forward with what they want to do. The Seattle Planning Commission members introduced themselves.

Council President Licata spoke briefly about his background and vision. Council President Licata noted that he had an open platform philosophy and believes in listening to what people around him are engaged in and then he picks up the best elements from those conversations. Council President Licata described the downtown zoning proposal process as an example. He noted that the role of the legislative branch is to alter and reshape legislation and analyze and hear from people. Council President Licata added that the real debate takes place on the amendments and in committee.

Council President Licata stated if you asked the Council what their vision was for Seattle, that they would say they are for preserving quality of life and increasing density to decrease congestion. He added that he sees the Council taking up issues that have been around a while and continue to struggle with them. He continued by addressing what he feels the Commission can contribute to would be the Commercial Code rewrite project for the neighborhood business districts. He noted that the real meat is in the ordinances dealing with height and parking ratios. Council President Licata noted that a lot of the communities' concerns with height actually have to do with parking.

Council President Licata asked the Commission what their thoughts were on where they would like to see the Council go. Vice-Chair Finrow stated that the Commission's role is to advise the City Council and the Executive about issues related to planning. He added that he feels that the Council perhaps thinks that the Commission has paid too much attention to the Executive at the expense of the Council to some extent. Vice-Chair Finrow continued that the Commission is sympathetic to that view and is eager to help the Council as much as possible.

Vice-Chair Finrow asked how the Commission stay informed on Council positions so that it can weigh in in a timely manner. Council President Licata suggested that the Commission work closely with the Chair of the UDP Committee and the membership on that committee. The Council President added that having the work plans would be helpful as well and to be in touch with Ben Noble on Council Central Staff. He also mentioned that it is good to read the community newspapers. Vice-Chair Finrow encouraged Council President Licata to bring issues that concern him to the Commission.

Commissioner Chris Fiori asked Council President Licata about the Viaduct and to go over the timeline and steps. Council President Licata stated that the majority of the Council is in favor of putting the options on a ballot. He added that he knows that Council member Steinbrueck wants to investigate the surface option. Council President Licata stated that he feels that the underpinnings of the surface option will be knocked out by the removal of State funds to do anything short of replacing road capacity. He added that all of the Council would like to see a transit solution for the corridor. Council President Licata continued that buses would require designated lanes and unless a considerable amount of money is invested it would not be much better than what we have now.

Council President Licata stated that he does not feel that the retrofit option has much support and he feels that it is going to come back to a tunnel or rebuild. He noted that there is a hardcore group of tunnel advocates but that seems to be shrinking as it becomes evident that the money is just not there. He feels the State is even shying away from the tunnel option and that at this point the rebuild is the option that we will end up with.

Vice Chair Finrow asked about the seawall and whether it is part of a Viaduct rebuild strategy. Council President Licata stated that it would be. He noted that it does not make any sense to talk about the Viaduct or the tunnel without talking about the seawall. He feels that the costs for the seawall rebuild with the tunnel would be more expensive than with the rebuild option.

Vice Chair Finrow asked Council President Licata what his views were on the State Route 520 Bridge rebuild. Council President Licata indicated that the Mayor and the City Council are very close in concept on this issue but there is no clear solution. He added that there is actually a larger gap in cost vs. funding on this project than there is on the viaduct project. He indicated that the project cost is something like a billion to a billion and a half dollars and there is no idea as to where this money would come from. Council President Licata noted that the risk of structural failure on this bridge is perhaps as great as the risk associated with the Viaduct and that would make it as much of a safety issue as the Viaduct.

Commissioner Carl See asked if there are particular priorities that the Council has regarding transportation. Council President Licata responded that pedestrian safety, having more pedestrian zones in the city, and dealing with the backlog of maintenance. Council President Licata brought up the issue of expanding parking meter fee collection times and that the City may explore the idea of extending collection times to 9pm on weeknights and on weekends.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson asked what Council President Licata sees as some of the emerging neighborhoods where the Planning Commission can make a difference. Council President Licata mentioned Georgetown and the controversy with two issues, one being the zoning issue regarding strip clubs and the other being the garbage transfer station being considered by King County/Metro. He added that having the Planning Commission take a look at the transfer station issue would be of great assistance to the Council. Council President Licata also mentioned Northgate and Hillman City. He added that they are trying to figure out how to get residential investment and how to spread the regeneration that occurred in Columbia City.

Commissioner Hilda Blanco asked if the Council was going to work on the incorporation of White Center. Council President Licata responded that he has created a special committee to work on incorporation of that area. Councilmember Richard Conlin is in charge of that committee. He added that the other members of that committee are Councilmembers Richard McIver and David Della.

Vice Chair Finrow thanked Council President Licata for his time.

▪ **ACTION: Comprehensive Plan 2006 Amendments Threshold Resolution**

Ms. Wilson noted that in the Commissioner's folders they will find a printout of the summary action of the email action that was taken regarding the Comp Plan Threshold Resolution. The summary action shows everyone's votes, what the action was and the final letter. The letter has already been approved

and sent and simply needs to be mentioned at this meeting so that it can be entered in to the Planning Commission's meeting record.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted the Summary Action for the record (attached)ⁱ

▪ **Planning Director Report**

- John Rahaim, Department of Planning & Development, City Planning

Mr. Rahaim indicated that he wanted to talk about the recent downtown zoning change adoption. He noted that one of the significant changes to downtown zoning is the housing development bonus. He noted that for the first time the code would require housing developers, who build buildings beyond a certain height limit, to pay into an affordable housing fund. He reported that the original proposal in the Mayor's legislation called for \$10 per square foot but Councilmember Steinbrueck's package proposed \$20 per square foot. After negotiation, it is now a graduated system (\$10 -\$25 a square foot) with an average of \$19 per square foot - the higher you go the more it is per square foot.

Mr. Rahaim also discussed the tower spacing provision noting that DPD had proposed towers to be spaced 80 feet apart within a block. They defined a tower being any building taller than 125 feet. There was also a provision that there could always be a second tower within the block. Mr. Rahaim noted that City Council, citing issues of fairness, has eliminated the tower spacing requirement. He added that what the Council ended up settling on are three different tower space requirements. They are 60 feet for the Denny Triangle area, 80 feet for the Belltown area, and 200 feet for the Pike Place Market area. He added that this applies to the DMC zone not the Downtown core area. Mr. Rahaim noted that the other change was in the DOC2 area, the area north of the convention center. He stated that DPD had initially proposed a height limit of 600 feet but that was lowered to 500 feet, but the FAR was kept at 14. Mr. Rahaim noted that the legislation takes effect 30 days from yesterday, so middle of May.

Vice-Chair Finrow asked if there were any projects that are up and running under the new guidelines. Mr. Rahaim responded that the Samus Corp is proposing a project on 2nd between Pike and Pine. Vice-Chair Finrow asked what they are going to do. Mr. Rahaim answered that it is a 400 foot tower in the middle of the block. Mr. Rahaim reported that there are several other projects moving ahead, but nothing specific at this point.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald asked how the money for affordable housing is going to be handled. Mr. Rahaim replied that a system is already in place in the Office of Housing and that the developer has two options. One is to develop the affordable housing on-site or pay a fee to the City's Office of Housing where it will be used for gap financing to non-profit housing developers. He added that the money has to be used for downtown projects and that it has to go to projects for people who earn 80% of median income or lower. He mentioned that there was some discussion whether to use the funds outside of the downtown area but the thinking is that the City might get more bang for its buck in projects outside of downtown, but the ultimate goal is to have mix of housing affordability downtown.

Commissioner Chris Fiori asked if there was an escalation factor for increasing the fee over time due to inflation or other factors. Mr. Rahaim responded that it is not and he wasn't sure why not.

Mr. Rahaim noted that one other change is that the bonus for LEED proposed by the Mayor has been bumped up to Silver LEED.

Briefing – Commercial Code revision (a.k.a. Neighborhood Business District Strategy)

- Lish Whitson, Department of Planning and Development
- Bob Morgan, Council Central staff

Lish Whitson gave a recap of the project and walked the Commission through the current recommendations. He noted that parking requirements have been proposed to be eliminated for all uses in commercial districts and that parking requirements would be left up to the market. He noted that the current parking regulations were introduced in the 1950's and are outdated.

Bob Morgan gave a review of Council Central Staff review and updates. He noted there are still some outstanding issues for Council. He noted the UDP committee endorses the idea of using FAR but needs to be fine tuned, the mapping of the first six areas, and there is a whole set of parking proposals that may be considered separately. He added that they should get through this legislation this spring. He continued that it will then be sent out for public review and there will be an opportunity for the Commission to review, then a public hearing followed by the final Council recommendations and then to the full Council by late summer's. Wilson asked when these review dates would be. Mr. Morgan answered that it would be anytime in next month for parking but then at the public hearing later on.

Vice Chair Finrow asked Mr. Morgan to speculate on Council's views on parking. Mr. Morgan replied that Council is generally receptive to the proposals but there are political realities. He added that there is sympathy with eliminating minimums in urban centers. Vice-Chair Finrow wondered how we might manage the public view of this issue. Mr. Rahaim responded that SDOT is getting much better at discussing the "managing the on-street parking" resource. Commissioner Tom Eanes pointed out that this in not preventing business owners from providing their own parking.

Roque DeHerrera gave an overview of the mapping process. He reported that the first group of 6 will be included in the legislation. There will be 61 more areas mapped divided in to groups of 20 or so. He stated that the first group will be worked on this summer and when most of the mapping is completed, it will be revised and refined and discussed over the course of the summer at public meetings in the neighborhoods being mapped.

Commissioner Eanes asked if there is a way to handle this gap between the adoption of the legislation and the mapping. Mr. Whitson replied that Council is keeping the conditional use process in place just for that reason.

Vice-Chair Finrow questioned how they are going to manage the parking issue in order to get the other issues they need to get to during the public meetings. Mr. DeHerrera responded that it will be tough to stay on schedule but staff will have to use the meeting to educate people on the aspects of the whole proposal.

Commissioner Hilda Blanco asked if they have thought of proposing neighborhood parking zone improvement districts. Bob Morgan reported that councilmember Steinbrueck is coordinating a Parking Forum where such issues will be raised and that the City has met with noted parking guru Donald Shopp about his ideas on parking districts

Vice-Chair Finrow reiterated that he worried that parking would subvert the other part of the agenda. He recommended creating a strategy to deal with it. He noted that at Eastlake meetings they limited discussion about parking for 10 minutes so we can get to other things.

Commissioner Valerie Kinast asked what the scale was of the projects in the P zones. Mr. Whitson replied that it was a wide range, from First Hill 250 unit towers to smaller three flats.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that the Planning Commission had complained earlier about the lack of mapping so he was pleased to see all the work that had been done on that aspect of the project.

Vice-Chair Finrow thanked DPD and Council Central staff for coming and their work.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment or questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Finrow adjourned the meeting at 5:28 pm.

MEMORANDUM

To Seattle Planning Commission
 From: Barbara Wilson, SPC Director
 RE: SPC ACTION

April 11, 2006

SPC ACTION

Summary of Action: 2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Threshold Resolution.

Approve the Final Draft of the April 12th, 2006 Seattle Planning Commission letter to Council member Peter Steinbrueck, Chair of the Urban Development and Planning Committee. The Letter provides the Planning Commission's recommendations on the 2006 Comp Plan threshold resolution which determines which amendments should be considered further. The Commission generally supports the Mayor's Threshold Resolution for determining which proposals should be considered and further analyzed or deferred to a later date (or reviewed through a separate planning effort). However, the Commission does reiterate its strong position that the City needs a comprehensive Industrial Lands Strategy for determining whether individual request for changes to land designated in the Comp Plan for industrial uses. The Commission also makes recommendations on the analysis criteria for several other proposed amendments.

COMMISSIONER VOTE OPTION ON ACTION

- ✓ Vote Yes To Approve
- ✓ Vote No On Approval
- ✓ Abstain From The Vote
- ✓ Recuse From The Vote

SPC OFFICIAL VOTE TALLY

1. Blanco – YES TO APPROVE
2. Blomberg – YES TO APPROVE
3. Clements – YES TO APPROVE
4. Eanes – YES TO APPROVE
5. Finrow – YES TO APPROVE
6. Fiori – YES TO APPROVE
7. Kaplan – YES TO APPROVE
8. Kinast – YES TO APPROVE
9. Sheehy – YES TO APPROVE
10. Sheridan – Unavailable for vote (Abstain)
11. See – YES TO APPROVE
12. *Quintana – RECUSED
13. To – YES TO APPROVE

12 members vote to approve

1 member recused

1 member was unavailable for vote (abstain)

Of the 12 members eligible to vote 11 vote to approve. Action is approved

NOTES FOR THE RECORD:

* Commissioner Quintana has recused himself from discussion and deliberations on all Planning Commission business.