



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 23, 2006

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Sheehy – Chair, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Valerie Kinast, Carl See, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To

Commissioners Absent

Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Mahlon Clements, Martin Kaplan, Joe Quintana

Commission Staff

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

Guests

Sally Clark, Seattle City Council Member; Alec Fiskin, Office of Policy and Management; Martha Lester; Council Central Staff

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 7:37 a.m. by Chair Steve Sheehy.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- January 26, 2006 Minutes Approval

ACTION: Commissioner Mimi Sheridan moves that the January 26, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Valerie Kinast seconds the approval. The motion passes unanimously.

- February 9, 2006 Meeting Notes

Chair Sheehy asked that the Commissioners look over the meeting notes from the February 9, 2006 meeting for accuracy. He explained that there is no action to be taken. These are merely notes and not official minutes since a quorum was not established at that meeting.

- Chair's Report & Events

Chair Sheehy reviewed upcoming meetings and events.

Chair Sheehy noted that Commissioner Lynn Krizanich has officially resigned from the Planning Commission after 6 years of service and that Commissioner Joe Quintana has decided to not renew for a second term so he too will be leaving the Commission after 3 years of service. He added that there will be an event to honor their service with the Commission.

Chair Sheehy updated the Commission on the ethics process. He noted that the Ethics Commission is reviewing our request for advisory opinions and that the Mayor's office is separately moving forward with legislation.

Chair Sheehy reported on the status of Commissioner recruitment by noting that the Commission has 5 open positions and that the candidates that have been interviewed are excellent.

Chair Sheehy called attention to the annual retreat and suggested that the retreat should focus on Commission history and background.

Chair Sheehy asked the Commissioners to look at today's agenda for possible conflicts of interest and to note them now. He indicated that he would leave the room for any discussion on Sound Transit 2. Commissioner Sheridan stated that she would be recusing herself from the discussion on ST2 as well as she has a contract with Sound Transit.

▪ **Project Updates**

○ **Progress Report: Industrial Lands Roundtable Report**

Scott Dvorak called attention to the Draft Table of Contents for the Industrial Lands Roundtable. He noted that the Land Use and Transportation committee is in the process of putting together a report on the roundtable based on this table of contents. The committee will refine the draft and then submit it to the full commission for their further review.

Commissioner Sheridan stated that a lot of time should be spent on numbers 5 and 6 on the table of contents (note: number 5 is "Next Steps" and number 6 is "Planning Commission Recommendations").

Commissioner George Blomberg added that eventually having an expanded discussion and broader public involvement would be desirable and that will be part of the next steps and recommendations.

Executive Director Wilson noted that on there are several 2006 Comprehensive Plan amendments that look at industrial lands - plus there is the South Downtown plan moving forward which includes possible changes for some industrially zoned land in that area. She noted that the committee observed that strong conversion pressures remain and yet no industrial lands strategy. She reported that with the timing of the budget process moving forward, the committee discussed the idea of writing a letter to Diane Sugimura, cc'ing the Mayor and some of his staff, to once again raise this issue. Ms. Wilson asked the Commissioners how they felt about supporting such a letter.

Commissioner Sheridan stated that she feels that it is really important. She feels that it is the main thing that we should do right away. The other Commissioners present concurred. Ms. Wilson responded that staff will draft a letter, send it out to the Commissioners for review, and then have it for approval at the next Commission meeting.

o Progress Report: Center City Neighborhood Analysis

Ms. Wilson reported that the proposed table of contents for the Center City Neighborhood Analysis was looked at in a committee meeting recently. She noted that the intent of the report is to look at consistency between neighborhood plans and what is moving forward with Center City Strategy. She added that there will be a comparison between the Center City Strategy and the Comprehensive Plan as well as the common themes between the ten neighborhoods. She mentioned that where they still need to spend some time is looking at the differences between neighborhoods and how to take all these neighborhood plans and link it all together.

Commissioner Sheridan expressed her concern over community character being listed under the cultural/human resources section. She feels that it would be more appropriate as part of the economics section. She also pointed out that it was not just the character of new buildings that is important but also making an effort to preserve a lot of what is already there.

Commissioner Tony To noted that they just went through developing a pretty comprehensive development strategy in SE Seattle. He feels that it is important to have community development organizations tied to the community so that their voice is there. He added that it would be helpful to have a common vision and that it is important to incorporate different elements together to develop that vision or theme.

Commissioner George Blomberg added that another way to address the economic aspect is to look at resources and attention from institutions.

Commissioner Sheridan noted that a few years ago the Commission did a study of the stewardship groups, interviewed all of them and produced a report. She added that the City has not provided resources for continued neighborhood planning.

Commissioner Blomberg added that hence the stewardship is withering. He noted that the Center City Neighborhood analysis report was very useful and that bullet point VI is a big task. (Note: VI is 10 unique neighborhoods, One Center City. Linking it all together: Recommendations for a Center City Strategy)

Commissioner To noted that 'economic development' implies a lack of market motivation but that is likely not the case for most downtown neighborhoods.

Commissioner Chris Fiori pointed out that there are decisions about where things should go. There are areas that might be better suited for affordable housing than downtown.

▪ ACTION ITEMS: Planning Commission Review & Actions

o Approve SPC Letter Supporting Legislation on allowing Detached Accessory Dwelling Units in Southeast Seattle

Chair Sheehy reported that he does not anticipate City Council moving quickly on this.

Ms. Wilson added that the last she heard from Neil Powers in Councilmember Steinbrueck's office was that it would be the end of the second quarter or beginning of the third quarter when this would be discussed at Council.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved to approve the letter and to send it to the Executive Committee to send it at the appropriate time. Commissioner To seconded. The Planning Commission unanimously approved the letter.

Ms. Wilson noted that the white paper referenced in the letter will be attached when the letter is sent out.

o Approve SPC letter Housing Affordability Draft Report

Ms. Wilson noted that this letter formalizes the comments made by Commissioners when Adrienne Quinn presented to the full commission back in January.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved to approve the letter. Commissioner Sheridan seconded. The Planning Commission unanimously approved the letter.

o Approve SPC Recommendation on Waterfront Concept Plan

Ms. Wilson noted that the letter included in today's folder is simply meant as a template that includes the subjects that John Rahaim asked us to look at more carefully in regard to the Waterfront Concept Plan. This letter does not need to be approved, but rather a work plan needs to be figured out to get the necessary review accomplished. She added that Commissioner Blomberg is the Commission's representative on the Waterfront Partners Group.

Chair Sheehy asked if there was some urgency around getting started with the Public Realm Plan.

Ms. Wilson answered that John Rahaim recently noted that if the Commission was going to send something to Council that now is the appropriate time. In our last briefing on the topic the Commission expressed a desire to send a letter that generally supports the Concept Plan and urges the City to move forward with the next phase on planning such as the creation of a Public Realm plan. She asked if there was additional review the Commission would like to do on the elements of the plan.

Commissioner Blomberg reiterated that fact that he thought there was some urgency in the Council adopting this so that DPD could move to the next phase. He agreed with sending a letter to support the Plan in general.

Commissioner Eanes noted that there is not a lot of substance in the Plan and that it is not worth more review from the Commission at this point. He noted that it is intended to be a Concept and that it achieves that level of detail. He added that the real problem is that the Public Realm Plan is lagging behind the engineering of the Viaduct project. He suggested striking the part of the letter that identifies the elements of the Plan.

Commissioner Fiori noted that at one of the Commission's previous meetings we discussed the importance of getting the vision out there.

Chair Sheehy asked if there were not really two things here. The first being that there is not enough “meat” to really understand what is going on and the second being that the public needs something they can respond to. The City needs to move forward to develop this in greater detail.

Commissioner Eanes said that Commissioner Fiori is right, that the Seattle Planning Commission should just endorse the Plan and get the Council going on it.

Chair Sheehy suggested that the bullet list be taken out and then the letter circulated via email to be approved. He assigned Commissioners Fiori and Blomberg to work with staff to take a first crack at revising the letter.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved to approve the letter in concept to be revised and circulated via email for approval. Commissioner Blanco seconded. The Planning Commission unanimously approved the letter.

Commissioner Sheridan recused herself from the discussion and the vote.

▪ **Welcome & Introduction: Councilmember Sally Clark**

Chair Sheehy welcomed newly appointed Councilmember Sally Clark and asked the Commissioners and the Commission staff to introduce themselves.

Councilmember Clark provided some background information about herself. She noted that she has been a Councilmember for 2 ½ weeks and holds position # 9. She is the chair of the Economic Development and Neighborhoods Committee. She noted some of the things that are standing on the work plan. One of the items is to do a check-in on Neighborhood Plan implementation.

Councilmember Clark noted that federal loans (Section 108 Loans) come through the committee. She mentioned that the façade improvement program is funded with community block grant dollars, as are a lot of programs and that the Bush administration is proposing slashing these funds by 30%.

Councilmember Clark noted that some of the other things her committee will be working on include checking in with City departments on how they are doing in the post I-200 world (Note: I-200 is the statewide initiative that prohibits "preferential treatment" based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, and contracting.). She added that her committee will be looking at what some groups are doing right and how the processes can be improve.

Councilmember Clark stated that she would like to jump-start the discussion around living wage jobs and look at what a city government can do to address this issue.

She added that she is also vice-chairing the Housing, Human Services and Health Committee and she is serving on the Utilities Committee. She noted that Bright Water is a big discussion right now.

Councilmember Clark mentioned that the other things that she is trying to do is to get out to as many community meetings that she can and to dive into some of the bigger issues facing the Council.

Commissioner Blanco noted that the Commission is working on the issue of stewardship with neighborhood plans. Commissioner Sheridan reminded Councilmember Clark of the Planning

Commissions history working on Neighborhood Plans and stated that the Commission could be useful in the discussions around Neighborhood Plan implementation.

Councilmember Clark stated that she gives some credit to the Mayor for reshaping the process. She mentioned that she went to the Southeast District Council meeting and there were at least 18 people there and they have an impressive agenda that they are working through. She noted that it seemed better in terms of community involvement.

Commissioner Blomberg noted that the comments that Councilmember Clark made were very congruent with what the Commission was talking about concerning Center City and the balance of the vision and how it relates to numerous issues. He added that we are looking at what the Commission can do about that as advocates.

Councilmember Clark noted that she is really struggling with the living wage jobs issue. She stated that she is unsure of how to directly connect creation of living wage jobs to the building of higher residential towers and how do you hold a developer responsible for that without stifling development.

Commissioner Fiori asked why we look to the developer for this instead of the employers.

Commissioner Sheridan offered that the development is the point of leverage.

Councilmember Clark answered that the longer term question is that of the deterioration of the social contract around employers being the place where you get a pension, healthcare, etc.

Commissioner Fiori noted that there is some value to getting people downtown, who can afford the high costs of the housing, and having them be there for the next fundraiser for the next city project – to be involved in the city’s cultural and political life. He added that this will bring strong voices to the City.

Commissioner Blomberg asked how the committees are put together within the City Council.

Councilmember Clark noted that it is driven by what the City Council members are interested in.

Chair Sheehy stated that the Commission is always looking for how they can be more effective in working with the City Council. He added that he feels that the Commission is most effective when Council has specific questions or requests.

Chair Sheehy thanked Councilmember Clark for coming to the meeting.

0 Discuss and Approve SPC Ethics Management Plan

Chair Sheehy noted that the Commissioners on the Commissions EMP committee are Commissioners Blomberg, Fiori, Finrow, and Kaplan.

Commissioner Blomberg reported that one manifestation of the Ethics Management Plan is apparent in today’s meeting agenda. It is set up to make it possible to address ethics at every point.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved to approve the plan in draft form subject to being reviewed after the legislation and after the advisory opinion by the Ethics Commission. Commissioner Blanco seconded. The action and the plan were opened for discussion.

Commissioner Sheridan stated that she has a strong objection to the disclosure of interests (i.e. “registry of interests”) contained in the first section of Part 2, in that the Commissioner’s entire life could be exposed and it essentially means that their lives could possibly be posted on the internet.

Commissioner Eanes agreed with her concerns and added that the section as written is much too broad. He questioned what “other interests” means or “matter”.

Commissioner Sheridan noted that she does, however, strongly support the last two items of Part 2. She added that she is reluctant to use the term “appearance of fairness”, as it is a legal term and she is not sure they should tie themselves to that. It’s a legal term with a specific meaning that we may not intend to mean here.

Commissioner Fiori stated that these sections could be reworded or fine tuned. The intent was to simply provide the public with the information needed to understand possible conflicts.

Commissioner Blomberg noted that the group’s intent was for it to be narrowly interpreted.

Ms. Wilson stated that not only do Commissioners bring their professional expertise to the table but they bring their affiliations as well. She added that the idea was to bring up “relevant” interests – we do want people to know the backgrounds of the Commissioners – but not to the point of having to reveal personal details.

Chair Sheehy replied that he had the same reservations about this section as well. He added that he particularly does not like the term “registry of interests”. He continued that the other thing is that disclosure of interest is intended to get at the heart of whether there is a conflict based on the code. He added that advisory committees are not required to file a financial statement. He feels that the declaration of interests ought to be very narrowly focused and maybe there is a way to do that.

Commissioner To stated that he has an issue with defining areas of potential conflict; is it financial, personal or etc. He added that it is not clear to him what the interests are that would be conflicts of interest. He continued that it would be good to define interests.

Chair Sheehy replied that is what we have asked the SEEC to do. He added that what is being talked about in Part 2 is disclosure and, in the code, elected officials are required to disclose through a financial statement what their financial interests are but advisory committees are not required to do this. He continued that from a conflicts perspective, an issue can be raised with a member’s participation by asserting that the member works for an agency that has a financial interest in the outcome of some particular legislation. He feels that the problem is that Commissioners have no way of knowing when this occurs so that is why we have asked for clarification from the SEEC.

Chair Sheehy suggested that the Commission not take action on the EMP document at this time. The Commissioners agreed to continue the conversation at a future date.

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes withdrew his motion to approve the plan in draft form subject to being reviewed after the legislation and after the advisory opinion by the Ethics Commission. Commissioner Blanco withdrew her second. The action on the plan approval was tabled so the committee and staff could appropriately revise. The Commission will have more discussion on the Ethics Management Plan at an upcoming meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 9:10 am.