



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JANUARY 10, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### Commissioners in Attendance

Linda Amato, Vice-Chair; Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Chelsea Levy, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Kirsten Pennington, Steve Sheehy

### Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist

### Commissioners Absent

Tony To, Chair

### Guests

Councilmember Sally Clark, Seattle City Council; David Yeaworth, Staff to Councilmember Clark; Rebecca Herzfeld, Ketil Freeman, Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff; Susan McLain, Gordon Clowers, DPD; Tony Mazella, SDOT

*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 3:00 pm.

### COMMISSION BUSINESS

Vice-chair Linda Amato welcomed the Commissioners to the first meeting of 2008. She stated that the Commission has another exciting year ahead and will grapple with several issues including affordable housing, industrial land retention, neighborhood plans, land use, transportation and many others.

#### ▪ Minutes Approval

**ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the December 13, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.**

#### ▪ Chairs Report

Vice-chair Amato reviewed some administrative issues and announcements. She stated that the 2008 draft workplan was in Commissioner's folders and that the Executive, HNUC and LUT committees have reviewed it. Vice-Chair Amato stated that the Commissioners will be asked to review and make additional comments soon. She added that the Commission is in the process of getting input from the Mayor, City Council and other City Departments on where they'd like the advice and assistance of the Commission this year. Vice-Chair Amato noted that the Commission will approve the work plan at the Annual Commission Retreat planned for April 24, 2008.

Vice-Chair Amato thanked Commissioner Clements for agreeing to represent the Commission at a two day planning charrette to look at issues involving urban form in South Lake Union. She added that it is a big commitment of time and that the Commission appreciates Commissioner Clements' willingness to represent the Commission.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that a task force committee will continue to meet with DPD regarding the update of the multifamily code through February. She added that this group met earlier in the week to discuss the Commission's December 21st memo and will meet again soon to do a worksession focused on the Green Factor.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson stated that Commissioner Jerry Finrow had agreed to sit on the Landmarks Preservation Board in the designated Commission spot and thanked him for his willingness to do so since it is a very significant time commitment.

Vice-Chair Amato noted some of the upcoming meetings. She called attention to the next full commission meeting which will be Thursday, January 24th from 7:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Vice-Chair Amato requested that the Commissioners save the date and plan to attend the Thursday, February 28, 2008 release of the Commission's Affordable Housing Action Agenda at City Hall, Bertha Landes Room, from 6:00-7:30 PM. She noted that the Commission will present the recently completed Affordable Housing Action Agenda and will host a panel discussion on the topic of affordable housing strategies for Seattle.

#### ▪ **Outgoing Commissioner Retrospectives**

Vice-Chair Amato stated that this is the last official meeting for two Commissioners who will be leaving the Commission after a long and distinguished tenure. She noted that Commissioner Mahlon Clements has been on the Commission for 4 years and Commissioner Steve Sheehy has completed two full terms. Vice-Chair Amato asked that they both take a few minutes to share some parting words.

Commissioner Clements stated that the previous year had brought a lot of changes to his life and although he regretted having to leave the Commission, he stated that he will continue to stay involved in the community in a variety of capacities, including serving on the board of Futurewise. He added that he has started to work more on mixed use and urban housing in his new professional position, and hopes to get more involved in these issues. Commissioner Clements continued that he appreciated his time on the Commission.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy stated that he had been reflecting on how much the Commission had changed in the past six years. He noted that when he started on the Commission there was uncertainty about what role planning would have in city government and since then, the Commission has done

important work on the Viaduct, Monorail, DADUs, Ethics, Incentive Zoning and Industrial Lands. Commissioner Sheehy noted that all of this work has been done by volunteers and that it was not just the success of each one of the those things, but that the overall the status of the Commission has increased tremendously, and has become to be seen as an objective body that doesn't come at issues from an interest group perspective. He ended with the suggestion that the Commission make sure to continue to have fun.

▪ **Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair**  
**Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee**

Vice Chair Amato asked that the Commissioners introduce themselves, noting what they do for a living, and what other civic organizations they are involved in.

Vice-Chair Amato thanked the Commissioners and then asked Councilmember Sally Clark to share any preliminary thoughts about her vision for the Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee (PLUNC) and to share any thoughts on ways that she feels the Commission can best work them.

Councilmember Clark gave a brief history of her professional career. She stated that she liked the concept of a Planning Commission for Seattle, as planning efforts here often feel disjointed and it can be overwhelming for communities to understand what the city is trying to achieve when there is a lack of clear vision. Councilmember Clark noted that she hopes that the PLUNC will work on how to make neighborhoods more humane, affordable and sustainable places to live, and how city initiatives can achieve that. She added that the PLUNC will be sending many requests to the Commission asking for input on a variety of issues.

Councilmember Clark stated she was glad to see that neighborhood planning is at the top of the Commission's '08 agenda and added that she hopes it can be an inclusive and comprehensive process. Councilmember Clark noted that once the Executive submits their proposal for the neighborhood plan updates, she hopes to discuss with the Commission about how to review it. She added that the Commission's affordable housing work looks very promising and that she hopes to see the spectrum of tools available to the city, including Cottage Housing, the Multifamily Tax Exemption, the Housing Levy, Section 8, Incentive Zoning, and others.

Commissioner Mark Johnson asked why Councilmember Clark took on the issue of neighborhood planning and what she thought could make the next process better. Councilmember Clark responded that she felt there was a lot of overlap with that issue and land use policy, so it made sense to combine it with the land use committee. She added that she was also very interested in getting people in neighborhoods more involved in their communities. Councilmember Clark noted that, the audit on neighborhood planning, that was recently completed, showed that if neighborhood residents were familiar with land use language, they created good usable plans, but that those that weren't often created vague plans. She added that language barriers and income disparity often played a role in these discrepancies between neighborhoods and that she hopes the city can do better, and wants to work on stewardship of the plans and what is done with the plans once they are completed.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy stated that cottage housing has been an important policy initiative for the Commission. He asked if it was being considered again for the city. Councilmember Clark replied that it depends, as good design of cottage homes is essential for their success and they must have a livable square footage and be integrated with the neighborhood to work well.

Commissioner Chris Fiori asked if there was the possibility of changing the 40-40-20 split for Metro service in King County. Councilmember Clark answered that she hopes to work on this issue, and needs support from King County Councilmembers in order to shift the current split.

Vice-Chair Amato thanked Councilmember Clark for her visit.

## **COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

### **▪ South Downtown DEIS Review (Discussion)**

- *Housing and Public Amenities*: Briefing from Housing, Neighborhoods & Urban Centers Committee (HNUC) Chair Jerry Finrow and Vice-Chair Mark Johnson on Committee recommendations
- *Industrial Lands and Transportation*: Briefing from Land Use & Transportation (LUT) Chair Chris Fiori and Vice-Chair Kevin McDonald on Committee recommendations

### **Recusal & Disclosures:**

- **Commissioner Mark Johnson disclosed that his firm, ESA Adolphson, worked on a study that was used in the preparation of the South Downtown DEIS.**

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission had previously decided not to do an intensive review of the entire DEIS and had instead chose to review it from a policy perspective through the lens of industrial lands, transportation, housing, and public amenities/open space. She noted that the LUT Committee led the review of the first two areas of interest and that the HNUC Committee led the review of the second two. Ms. Wilson stated that the Chair and Vice-Chair of each committee will give a report on their committee's review, followed by discussion. She added that the Executive Committee will discuss the two reports, and on January 24<sup>th</sup> the Full Commission will review and vote on a final report that combines both the LUT and the HNUC reviews.

Commissioner Jerry Finrow started the presentation of the HNUC report. He stated that the overall concerns related to the lack of a clear vision of the nature of the district and what it should become in the future. Commissioner Finrow added that there should be more of a specific plan for public amenities and green space for the area. He continued that all the aspects of what it takes to make a viable, livable neighborhood should be addressed, and a funding plan for achieving this should be created.

Commissioner Finrow stated he had added a section reviewing the physical environment in the study area and that there were concerns about the lack of maps detailing where the liquefaction zones in the study area were. He added that there were grave concerns about placing housing on liquefaction zones, and felt there should be a review of the literature regarding seismic concerns in urban areas.

Commissioner Finrow noted that as for the sustainability strategies found in the DEIS, the planning staff deserved congratulations for developing a variety of forward thinking strategies regarding district heating, storm water harvesting, and other issues.

Commissioner Johnson continued the report, stating that the liquefaction concerns were primarily about building housing there, which presents a very different and more severe set of problems if it is rendered unusable by an earthquake than if a commercial building is affected. He added that every neighborhood in the study area is different, and overall there were concerns about taking a 'one size fits all' approach to the area. Commissioner Johnson noted that housing increases should include infrastructure for new residents and that there were concerns about the data used to develop the numbers detailing the

demand for affordable housing in the area. He added that the 11% number used for the incentive program may be too low and that some areas being considered for housing have large amounts of pollution and noise, and may not be suitable for housing.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald started the discussion of the LUT review of the DEIS. He stated that the overall comments of the review refer to a lack of clear purpose and need for undertaking the study. Commissioner McDonald stated that since the LUT report had been prepared, he had discovered a section of the DEIS that deals with this issue, but it was difficult to locate and quite short. He added that language calling for better explanation of the purpose and need of the study should remain, but may need to be downplayed a bit.

Commissioner Chris Fiori noted that the LUT Committee discussed adverse impacts on industrial lands and the industrial job base if certain land was rezoned. He added that the Commission's report on industrial land states that the city should not reduce the geographic areas of IG1 and IG2 zones. Commissioner Fiori noted that the question was if the Commission wanted to retain consistency or if there was some room for some flux. He said that none of the alternatives include a scenario that maintains IG zoning in the study area and that this alternative should have been provided.

Commissioner McDonald noted that the existing conditions section regarding transportation in the DEIS was remarkably good and that it revealed that no matter what is done, the existing system is near capacity. He added that 90% of the traffic there is pass through traffic and that some fundamental infrastructure investments should be made to encourage biking, walking, and transit and freight mobility. Commissioner McDonald noted that the Committee was not concerned with the mobility of Single Occupancy Vehicles in the study area. He stated there was extensive section on potential mitigation strategies for the area, but that this section seemed more like a laundry list of types of ideas that could be applied generically, and could have used more specificity. Commissioner McDonald noted that the Committee felt transportation issues should be looked at more regionally than locally. He added that many transit routes are at capacity, and increasing capacity will just exacerbate existing problems. Commissioner McDonald continued that what is decided regarding the Viaduct will have significant impacts on the study area.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that she wanted to emphasize the need for a strong public policy rationale for rezoning industrial land for the city. She noted that the Commission's report clearly states that industrial land zoned IG1 or IG2 should not be taken away. Vice-Chair Amato mentioned that more regional transportation mitigation strategies are necessary. She added that, regarding freight mobility, there needed to be more analysis of how the Fast Corridor study related to the study.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated that from the perspective of the level of impact each alternative will have on transportation in the study area, the alternatives are not significantly different from each other.

Commissioner Johnson stated he would like to see future analysis on how a streetcar network would affect transportation in the area. Commissioner Finrow added that he would also like to see analysis of the ferry system and changes to Colman Dock.

Commissioner Tom Eanes asked DPD staff about the projections for how much affordable housing the incentive zoning program would create. He said the numbers assume the leveraging of funds gained in the study area with funds from other sources that are already tapped out.

Susan McLain stated that it was true that the estimates assume the leveraging of other sources of funds.

Commissioner Clements stated that regarding the over the tracks development proposal, it was worth providing context that if the city wants to create new jobs and housing units, the proposed changes could be made for the site, or it could remain the way it is now for an extended period of time.

Commissioner Finrow stated that the comments regarding this site were in part meant to prompt discussion of the lack of open space in the area.

Commissioner Kaplan stated that he was concerned about the Commission making value judgments about where housing should be allowed and that there could be opportunities there that the Commission might want to be more open to. Commissioner Johnson replied that the report isn't intended to say that all places are off limits to housing in the study area. He added that, instead, there are particular places that are of high concern, particularly regarding air quality right next to an elevated freeway. Commissioner Finrow added that much of the industrial zones are industrial for a reason. He noted that it is important to protect industrial lands and to recognize that much industrial land is not suitable habitation. Commissioner Finrow noted, for example, the DEIS suggests glazing windows in housing developments to guard against noise and pollution, but this is in opposition to current thinking about how to design a sustainable building with operable windows.

Commissioner Clements added that the focus of the Commission's thoughts should be on the value of the land as industrial land rather than as it being unsuitable for housing.

Commissioner Fiori stated that he felt public investment should be the first priority for areas being considered for increases in density and that jobs and housing should follow. He added that it would be difficult to develop an incentive zoning program as market conditions are changing and will change a great deal in the future. Commissioner Fiori noted that, on the issue of industrial lands, he thought that the IG land being considered for rezoning had special circumstances, including being surrounded by stadiums and freeways, that make it more desirable for zoning other than IG. He continued that, in particular, the South of Dearborn area has existing barriers created by freeways that make it a good candidate for rezoning.

Commissioner Leslie Miller stated that there are a wide variety of parking issues in the study area, including the strains special events put on the parking supply there. She asked if this issue had been reviewed. Commissioner McDonald responded that the Committee did not do an extensive review of this issue.

Commissioner Kaplan stated one of the reasons for rezoning this area was for sustainability reasons, to increase the housing stock close to downtown. He added that there were not a lot of opportunities to do this, and so the Commission should not close the door on housing in the study area.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that the Commission came out with a report that clearly states a position regarding industrial lands. She added that at the very least, the Commission has the responsibility to analyze it through the lens of that report and go on record with this analysis.

Ms. McLain stated that DPD hopes to finish the EIS and agree upon a preferred alternative this year. She noted that the first round of suggested changes would include only those areas outside of the Duwamish MIC, while those areas inside the MIC would go through a separate and later review.

- **Legislative Updates**  
**Industrial Lands: Update on final size of use ordinance & resolution, 2007 Comprehensive Plan Amendments; New process for Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments**  
- Rebecca Herzfeld & Ketil Freeman, Council Central Staff

Rebecca Herzfeld detailed changes to the process for reviewing Comprehensive Plan amendments. She noted that the amendments must now be submitted to City Council rather than DPD. Ms. Herzfeld added that Council will then submit a policy docket detailing which amendments should be studied further to DPD. She noted that the new process includes a more formalized role for the Planning Commission's review of the amendments. Ms. Herzfeld continued that the changes were made to both foster a more efficient and quicker process as well as to give the Council more of a role in setting the policy agenda for the city.

Ketil Freeman detailed the recently passed legislation changing size of use limits in certain industrial zones. He noted that the differences between the legislation passed by Council and that proposed by the Mayor included: eliminating proposed size of use limits for accessory uses; eliminating proposed size of use limits for marine and retail services; eliminating proposed limits in IB zones' increasing the proposed maximum size of use in IG2 zones from 10,000 square feet to 25,000 square feet; and eliminating the proposed reduction of FAR limits in industrial zones. Mr. Freeman also detailed a companion work resolution passed by Council directing DPD to undergo a variety of efforts relating to industrial lands, including exploring alternative regulatory approaches, conducting further economic analysis of the area, and developing an inclusive stakeholder process to inform and facilitate the work program.

Commissioner Sheehy stated that he wanted to commend Council for their work on the issue. He stated it would have been very easy to put it off for a year, and potentially politically expedient to do so, but they hadn't.

Commissioner Johnson stated it was an important statement to the market and that it may take more effort to preserve industrial lands, but this was a major first step. Commissioner Fiori stated that the next step should be developing an investment strategy for the area, and to get more involved with the SODO Action Agenda. He added that it was important to retain existing businesses and make sure the industrial lands are economically feasible.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Vice-Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:31 pm.