

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 24, 2003
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance: John Owen, Chair; George Blomberg, Vice Chair; Angali Bhagat, Angela Brooks, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan, Steve Sheehy, Tony To, Paul Tomita.

Commissioners Absent: Gregory Davis, Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Denise Lathrop.

Staff: Marty Curry, Executive Director; Barbara Wilson, Commission Analyst.

Guests: Brad Gassman, City Design; Yvonne Sanchez, Department of Neighborhoods.

Call to Order

Chair John Owen called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Lyn Krizanich made a motion to approve the July 10, 2003 minutes
Commissioner Tony To seconded and the Commission unanimously approved the minutes with the addition.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair John Owen reminded the Commissioners of upcoming events including;

- Northgate Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, July 29 at 7:30 a.m. to discuss next steps and advice to Council President Steinbrueck and OPM. Chair Owen encouraged Commissioners to attend and get their ideas to staff or to him prior to the meeting if not able to attend.
- City Council briefing on Commission's Housing Choices Report on Monday, August 4th in Council Chambers. He noted that Commissioners Mimi Sheridan, Jeanne Krikawa, Tony To and John Owen will be participating in this briefing.
- City Council Committee of the Whole will hold a Discussion of Mayor's Northgate Proposal on Monday, August 4th.

Chair Owen also announced that there would be no Full Commission meetings in August; instead the Commission will use scheduled committee meetings for topical briefings and discussions. He noted that more information on topics would be forthcoming.

Chair Owen stated that the remainder of the Planning Commission meeting would be devoted to discussion sessions with the final candidates for DCLU Planning Director position. He

noted that Roger Wagoner, former Commissioner participated on the rating panel and Commissioner Paul Tomita and Director Marty Curry participated in the interviews. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity for the Commission to meet with the final candidates. He also asked that Commissioners stay for a short time after the last candidate to prepare a summary of their comments/impressions to share with DCLU Director Diane Sugimura.

Chair Owen noted that the Commission will have 40 minutes with each candidate, and have given each of the three candidates several broad questions to focus on in their 10 minute presentation. He noted that the presentation will be followed with questions from the Commissioners, with time reserved for a few questions from the audience.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION WITH PLANNING DIRECTOR FINALIST: PATRICIA RINCON-KALLMAN

Commission Chair Owen welcomed Ms. Patricia Rincon-Kallman and then briefly explained the role and purpose of the Planning Commission. The Commissioners introduced themselves and then Chair Owen invited Ms. Rincon-Kallman to give her presentation.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman stated that she was delighted to be able to address the Planning Commission and that she had prepared remarks based on the questions that the Commission sent last week.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman began with a brief background on her education and experience, noting that she has a Masters in Regional and Urban Planning from the University of Colorado and 20 years of experience in the planning field. She stated that most of her current work and the majority of her experience is in the long range planning arena but that she also has significant experience in current planning. She has been involved with organizational development, development agreements, and zoning board decisions. She has received awards for development of a comprehensive plan and for a parks and open space project. In Palm Beach she received an award for developing a 17-element comprehensive plan.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman currently works for the City of Houston where she manages comprehensive planning and the City's effort to create a zoning ordinance. The fact that Houston has no zoning has forced her to think creatively and come up with innovative "out of the box" solutions. For instance, after fierce opposition from development interests to stop the zoning ordinance in its tracks, the Planning Division began a Creative Visioning Process that yielded some very important results.

Another major project in which Ms. Rincon-Kallman is involved is the Main Street Corridor project which is the City's corridor redevelopment project around light rail. She worked with eight different districts and developed a Master Plan for the main street corridor. They formed a 75 member partnership and she was able to acquire 5 successive TCSP grants which have been used to jump start Transit Oriented Development and infill projects. From the City's perspective this made the light rail a much more valuable element for the community.

In her current position she is in charge of planning and research which includes urban design, large and small design, neighborhood planning, economic development, land use policy, demographic studies and economic impact studies. She presents to a wide range of audiences and has for many years presented at APA annual conferences. She brings to the position upper level management experience, having managed annual budgets from \$1 to \$ 3.1 million and managed 25 – 55 employees. She brings a team approach, flexibility, with excellent leadership skills. She is creative and thinks outside the box and has excellent facilitation and consensus building skills.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman believes the biggest challenges with this position will be to bring together the dispersed functions in an approach that successfully integrates these functions to implement the Comprehensive Plan. She would focus her efforts in developing an approach to integrate the Comprehensive Plan with land use regulations and transportation planning that all groups are comfortable with. This involves developing a team process that builds relationships among leaders and staff. A team process will help overcome territorial and resource constraints. It will also involve an understanding and assessment of how these functions mesh with the Mayor's priorities.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman then discussed how she would work with the Planning Commission. She stated that she views the Planning Commission as the pulse to the community and its politics. She sees the Commission as a sounding board for advice on projects as well as a group with its eyes on the broader long range planning vision. She would hope to hold working sessions with the Commission and would actively encourage staff to keep the Commission informed through on going study sessions. She stated that she saw the Planning Commission as a valuable asset in helping to implement the City's vision. Ms. Rincon-Kallman concluded her presentation and then said she would like to hear from Commissioners and answer any specific questions.

Commissioner Lyn Krizanich asked Ms. Rincon-Kallman to share some of the lessons she learned in Houston working on the Main Street project and with the light rail authority that would be relevant for Seattle. Ms. Rincon-Kallman stated that she learned the importance of coordination and how the pieces are integrated. She also learned effective ways to work with partners and bringing the players together. She noted that it was sometimes difficult working with the transit authority to look at broader transit impacts to communities such as safety, transit oriented development and other ways to make better use of this investment to stimulate better things for the City. She stated that her experience working to integrate seven district

plans as well as the area plans was a valuable process that would deepen what she would bring working in Seattle with its neighborhood plans. She also wanted to take advantage of what was happening and look for community development opportunities.

Commissioner Krizanich also asked why she was interested in this position. Ms. Rincon-Kallman stated that she was drawn to Seattle because it is a very beautiful city and she is attracted by the climate with regard to growth and development. She has learned a tremendous amount working in a city without tools such as zoning but would find it refreshing to be back in a situation where there are more tools to get good things done. She would love to be in a place like Seattle because people very much value “quality of life”. She also likes the challenge of this position.

Without further questions from the Planning Commission, Chair Owen asked for questions from others in the room. Yvonne Sanchez, Director of the City’s Department of Neighborhoods asked Ms. Rincon-Kallman about neighborhood planning. Ms. Sanchez stated that neighborhood plans are a critical part of the distinctive nature of the neighborhoods in Seattle. She asked Ms. Rincon-Kallman how she would work with communities especially when the City does not always interpret things the same way as the community.

Ms. Rincon-Kallman said that in Houston she worked with 88 neighborhoods and created a neighborhood system whereby the neighborhoods began to work collectively to set priorities while working with the available resources. This was done without giving up services or ignoring expectations. She stated her belief there is a strong role for planning and a need to bring disparate interests under the same tent in order to steward the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Owen thanked Ms. Rincon-Kallman for her time and expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to meet with her and have this discussion.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION WITH PLANNING DIRECTOR FINALISTS: BJ BROOKS

Commission Chair John Owen welcomed Ms. BJ Brooks and then briefly explained the role and purpose of the Planning Commission. The Commissioners introduced themselves and Chair Owen then invited Ms. Brooks to give her presentation.

Ms. Brooks thanked the Commission for the opportunity to come and talk with them. She stated that she had the opportunity to visit Seattle during the APA conference and finds Seattle to be an interesting and exciting place. She said in reviewing the questions it seemed that the Commission was looking for information about competencies, characteristics and credentials. To begin with credentials, Ms. Brooks highlighted her education, a BA in Sociology with an emphasis in African American Studies and Latin Studies and a Masters degree in Urban Planning. She also attended a special nine month program at the Kennedy

School of Government at Harvard, by special invitation, where she focused on policy development and management. She is a certified mediator and ran a conflict resolution firm where she solidified her facilitation and management skills and she has training in negotiation.

Ms. Brooks explained that she has worked as a senior planner and a neighborhood planner, having developed 12 neighborhood plans in Denver. She has worked on neighborhood bond issues for streetscape and major corridor planning. She has experience with capital budgets and comprehensive planning. Formerly, as the Parks Director in Denver she was in charge of Parks operations. The skills she brings are budget and personnel management, building strong relationships and policy management.

Ms. Brooks stated that she believes has a strong character and is open, honest and has a sense of humor. She values fun and collaboration in the work setting and describes herself as a team player with a strong passion, leadership and vision. A passion for the work is critical in building capacity. She values diversity, not only color diversity but also in thinking, living standards and values. The other trait she has is resiliency and a strong work ethic.

Ms. Brooks then talked about what she felt are the biggest challenges of the job. She stated that she sees three main functional roles for the Planning director – policy, coordination and operations. She stated that collaboration and coordination will be crucial. She outlined additional challenges as implementing the Comprehensive Plan through understanding its vision and creating a sense of a shared commitment; looking for economic opportunities such as reconnecting the waterfront to the downtown business core; and housing affordability where she believes that the Hope VI plan offers a framework or guide.

Ms. Brooks also stated that collaboration is an important challenge for the Planning Director role and that public and private partnerships are a must for accomplishing ideas. Building a relationship with the media on the Comp Plan is critical -- planning efforts need a communications buzz that focuses on coordination and partnerships. She stated that we need to plan for the good times and the bad times and that the department will need to build both physical and social capital and have a reserve to deal with the bad times. She stated that she believes things like operations, neighborhood outreach and capacity building are important and that staff at the operations and implementation level are important. She believes that staff should have rewards for good work and that they should get leadership and support they need to do their jobs.

Chair John Owen asked Ms. Brooks how she would envision working with the Planning Commission and how the Planning Commission could work with her in this role. Ms. Brooks says she views the Planning Commission as the brain trust and stewards of the visionary documents that will help guide the City. She views the Planning Commission as the promoters of making Seattle one of the healthiest cities in the country. She also stated that

she does not take the term “advisory” very lightly at all. Her vision is the Planning Commission would have a big role as a brain trust stating that she puts a big value on human capital. She also sees the Planning Commission helping to create positive synergy with neighborhoods.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy asked Ms. Brooks why she is interested in Seattle. Ms. Brooks stated that she feels she has gone full circle in Denver. She also stated that she is a political appointee and there is a new administration coming into Denver. She has completed major city initiatives and she has too much energy to wait out retirement. She craves taking on a new challenge, broader initiatives and in looking at Seattle believes she would have a lot of value to add.

Yvonne Sanchez asked about her commitment to neighborhood planning and the commitment to these plans in the face of conflict between neighborhood desires and City goals and resources. Ms. Brooks stated that she believes that we must create a forum to work through tough issues. Plans should also be implemented and we should work to get neighborhoods to embrace and feel a part of City-wide goals. You really need to get down to the nitty-gritty to resolve differences. Collaboration through communication and outreach are important tools as are strong capacity and leadership. She also stated that she finds that there is usually more consensus than you think.

Commissioner Paul Tomita asked how she thought she would make the transition from a political appointment to working under a director. Ms. Brooks said she has worked within a chain of command and respects that. Getting clarity of roles and responsibilities helps create a better working relationship throughout a division or agency.

Chair Owen thanked Ms. Brooks for her time and expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to have this discussion.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION WITH PLANNING DIRECTOR FINALISTS: JOHN RAHAIM

Commission Chair Owen welcomed Mr. John Rahaim and Commissioners introduced themselves. Then Chair Owen then invited Mr. Rahaim to give his presentation.

Mr. Rahaim expressed his appreciation to the Commission for inviting him. He stated that even though many of the Commissioners are familiar with him through his work at City Design he welcomed the opportunity to talk more about his past work and his vision for this position and for planning at the City of Seattle.

Mr. Rahaim stated that he has worked at the City of Seattle as the Director of City Design for four years and before that spent 15 years as the Associate Director in the Planning and

Development Department for the City of Pittsburgh. In this role he worked a lot in the community process. He led a 7-year process to rewrite the zoning code, in which the first year dealt with nothing but planning issues. His other major project was working with the redevelopment authority at the City of Pittsburgh. He stated that he is excited about the Planning Director position for several reasons. It is a great opportunity to create a team and an identity for planning at DCLU. It is also an opportunity to create a strong identity for planning city wide and believes that planning should be viewed as a broader city function. Mr. Rahaim stated that one of his strengths is that he is willing to break the rules and get to think creatively.

Mr. Rahaim then outlined the biggest challenges of the position. First it is important to re-energize staff and get them excited again to do planning work. He feels it is important to tap into the strengths and institutional memory and knowledge of the staff.

Mr. Rahaim stated that second challenge is the political survival of planning. Planning should be seen as indispensable and integral to everything the City does and he wants to help move that vision. A big challenge will be helping to better articulate and show the link between planning and implementation. He believes that urban design is a tool to make that linkage. He also stated that a big challenge would be to get buy in and acceptance on the Comprehensive Plan as the guiding principle for the City.

Mr. Rahaim then stated his views on how he would work with the Planning Commission. He suggested that the Planning Commission would benefit from a stronger identity reconfirming its quasi-independent status. He suggested that the Commission may consider the need to more narrowly define what it is involved in and focus on major planning initiatives. He also suggested that he would work to help create a stronger identity for the Planning Commission and perhaps even make it required that the Commission has to review certain kinds of things that are clearly defined. The Planning Commission plays an important role in involving the public but needs to protect itself within the department from being an outreach arm for DCLU.

Mr. Rahaim concluded his remarks and Chair John Owen opened up the meeting for questions and comments from Commissioners. Commissioner Tony To asked what Mr. Rahaim thought about tax increment financing as a tool for Seattle. Mr. Rahaim responded that tax increment financing is a great tool but it can be a double edged sword because it causes dependence, so he suggests narrowly defining it.

Commissioner Paul Tomita asked Mr. Rahaim whether he has thought through leaving City Design and how he would disengage himself from his "baby". Mr. Rahaim stated that indeed was a difficult decision that he contemplated long and hard before deciding to submit his application for the Planning Director position. He realizes he will have to let go of the day to day details but that in the role of Planning Director he would also be in a strong position to

better integrate urban design into planning and make planning and urban design a city wide division.

Chair John Owen thanked Mr. Rahaim for his time and expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to have this discussion.

COMMISSION ACTION: RECOMMENDATION TO DIANE SUGIMURA

The Planning Commission decided to submit a memo to DCLU Director Diane Sugimura outlining their view of the three the Planning Director final candidates. They agreed that any of the three candidates would be qualified and would bring tremendous strengths to the position. The Commissioners briefly discussed strengths and weaknesses of each of the candidates, and they directed Marty Curry to draft a memo to Ms. Sugimura that the Executive Committee would review at their July 29 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN

Commission Chair John Owen adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.