



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JUNE 22, 2006 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Sheehy – Chair, Jerry Finrow – Vice Chair, Hilda Blanco, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Michelle Mattox, Kirsten Pennington, Tony To

Commissioners Absent

Linda Amato, George Blomberg, Tom Eanes, Kay Knapton, Kevin McDonald, Carl See

Commission Staff

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

Guests

Bill Block, Co-Chair Mayor's Task Force on Seattle Center Sustainability; Robert Nellams, Acting Director Seattle Center

In Attendance

Jack Burns, Gary Gayton

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 7:34 am by Chair Steve Sheehy.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ **Chair's Report**

- **Upcoming Events and Meetings**

Chair Sheehy reviewed the meeting agenda, the upcoming events and meetings. He noted in particular the following meetings:

- City Council Public Hearing on the Mayor's Transportation Funding Package on Wednesday, June 28, 5:30pm – 7:30pm at Seattle City Hall, City Council Chambers
- Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee meeting on Tuesday, July 11, 7:30am – 9:00am, SMT 4096
- Full Commission meeting will be Thursday, July 13, 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm, CHL280.

- **Announcements and Reports**

- Get Engaged Member – the Commission just completed interviews for next year’s Get Engaged member. The new member will replace Commissioner Carl See in September. Thanks to Commissioners Chris Fiori and Carl See for their help in the interview process.
- White Center & North Highline Tour – Barbara Wilson, Scott Dvorak, Commissioners Linda Amato, Michelle Mattox, Kirsten Pennington, and Tony To went on a tour of the area June 19. Executive Director Wilson reported on the highlights of the tour.
- Vision 2020 Update – Chair Sheehy reported that the Executive Committee had a briefing of the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2020 Update. The update is about how the region will accommodate forecasted growth. It anticipates an increase of 1.6 million people and 1.1 million jobs in the region by 2040. The goal of the update is to select a preferred growth alternative. Comments on the DEIS are due at the end of July. There will be another chance to weigh-in in the fall after a preferred alternative has been selected. Vice-Chair Finrow gave a quick update noting that they are beginning to consider assigning growth numbers to different parts of the Puget Sound region. He added that this is going to impact Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan in the future. Vice-Chair Finrow also called attention to the fact that some of the numbers they are talking about in terms of anticipated growth are quite staggering. He noted that in one of the alternatives Seattle has been allocated about 400,000 new residents. Vice-Chair Finrow then pointed out that the criteria for the preferred alternative public comment is due at the end of July.
- **Approve June 8, 2006 SPC Minutes**

ACTION: Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow moved that the June 8, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Kirsten Pennington seconded the approval. Commissioner Martin Kaplan abstained. The motion passed.

▪ **ACTION ITEMS: Planning Commission Review & Actions**

o **Election of New Planning Commission Officers**

Commissioner Valerie Kinast reported on the new officers for the Seattle Planning Commission. She stated that the recommendations for the leadership positions were: for Chair, Jerry Finrow; for Vice-Chair, Tony To; for At-Large Executive Committee members, Martin Kaplan and Valerie Kinast; for Land Use and Transportation Chair it would be a co-chair position with Chris Fiori and Mahlon Clements; and in regard to the HNUC Chair there has been several nominations but no decision has been reached so they would like to defer that until the July 13 meeting. She added that as Emeritus Executive Committee member they would like to nominate George Blomberg.

ACTION: Commissioner Kaplan moved that the nominations be approved. Commissioner Hilda Blanco seconded the approved. The motion passed unanimously.

o **Letter to Council on proposed ethics legislation**

Chair Sheehy called attention to the letter contained in the Commissioner’s folders. He noted that this letter is directed to the City Council on the proposed ethics legislation that was sent by the Mayor’s

office last Friday. The letter from the Commission supports the legislation that amends the ethics code to address advisory board and committees more specifically. Chair Sheehy added that they will be ratcheting up the effort to get Council to move forward with this legislation. He pointed out that the current moratorium ends on August 2nd and there are several meetings planned with City Councilmembers.

ACTION: Commissioner Tony To moved that the Planning Commission's letter to Council supporting the legislation to amend the ethics code for volunteer advisory boards be approved. Commissioners Clements and Fiori seconded the approved. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **Briefing – Seattle Center Task Force Report**
 - **Robert Nellams, Acting Director Seattle Center**
 - **Bill Block, Co-Chair Mayor's Task Force on Seattle Center Sustainability**

Mr. Nellams provided background on the Mayor's Task Force on Seattle Center. He noted that there are nine members on the Task Force. He added that the Task Force met over a period of 11 months with the Seattle Center staff presenting to them 14 different business plans and an EIS study conducted. Mr. Nellams continued that the Task Force came up with three over-arching principles:

1. Significant on-going contribution of public funds to Seattle Center is not just critical for its sustainability but appropriate public policy that recognizes the public benefits that the Center provides.
2. Seattle Center succeeds because it has struck a balance between public and commercial programs and financing, this balance must be maintained and continually reviewed.
3. Every asset of Seattle Center should reach its maximum potential in achieving the Center's mission while meeting the changing demands of the city and region.

Mr. Nellams stated that the Task Force laid out these principles and then came up with six action steps that they would recommend to the Mayor. They are:

1. Remove the remaining KeyArena renovation capital debt from Seattle Center's operating budget. This single move will allow Seattle Center to face its future without an on-going deficit, thus making the greatest contribution to Seattle Center's financial sustainability.
2. Restore some of the cuts made to Seattle Center's operating budget over the past five years and work to preserve all of the Center's assets, including its people, its programs and its image.
3. Maintain and improve transportation access to Seattle Center.
4. Make sufficient capital investments to allow Seattle Center to "reinvent" aging facilities to stay current with changing market demands and provide on-going maintenance for facilities to retain their productive value.

5. Invest in major initiatives to brand and market Seattle Center, its programs and facilities, and invest in the asset of Seattle Center community programs.

6. Invest in KeyArena.

Mr. Block added that Seattle Center is an amazing amalgam of organizations and programs. He noted that the mix of cultures, people and experiences is what makes it so special and unique. Mr. Block noted that the Task Force looked at how the Seattle Center keeps this happening. He discussed some of the major areas of the Center and how they could be improved. Mr. Block stated that the mission is to have Seattle Center live up to its description as the nation's best gathering place.

Commissioner To asked about the percentage of use by Seattleites versus people from outside of Seattle. Mr. Block responded that the spending of Seattle Center visitors and businesses created \$1.15 billion in business activity with new money being almost \$600 million. He added that about 50% of the Center's visitors are from outside of King County and that 93% of visitors to Seattle Center indicated that the primary reason for their trip was to attend a performance/exhibition/event at the Center. Mr. Block continued that, in the list of the 10 best places in Washington State, 4 of those are located in the Seattle Center.

Commissioner To wondered if the State is interested in what is happening at the Center. Mr. Block noted that the State appears to be only moderately interested - an example of this is McCaw Hall which raised all the private money that it promised to raise but is having trouble getting State money that was promised.

Chair Sheehy questioned how Key Arena debt could be dealt with. Mr. Block replied that it has to be paired with some City capital funding source. He emphasized that the Center has to get capital debt out of its operations budget. Chair Sheehy pointed out that it would have to come from somewhere. Mr. Block answered yes but it shouldn't come out of the Center's operating budget. He added that the KeyArena was projected to generate \$7 million a year in ticket revenues from suites and premium seating and then the public would put \$800 million into new and competing suites but that revenue dropped. He continued that this arrangement worked for about 5 years. Mr. Block stated that the real issue is that however you account for it the Center's capital liability shouldn't come out of plants and gardeners, it is the wrong budget.

Commissioner Clements asked if there was a physical master plan for Seattle Center that is considered current for the whole place. Mr. Nellams answered that the current master plan was last revisited in 2000 to incorporate the changes in McCaw Hall and Fisher Pavilion. Mr. Nellams noted that in the master planning process there were guiding principles established that are still used today.

Commissioner Clements asked if there was a connection between this process and revisions to that master plan provision. Mr. Nellams responded that there was a connection and that some of the proposals would need an update or an EIS for the changes.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington asked how the community was involved in this process. Mr. Block answered that the Task Force was chosen to be fairly representative but it was operating on a very tight time schedule and it did not hold community meetings.

Commissioner Pennington asked if they had done any user surveys. Mr. Block replied that over the years Seattle Center has done a lot of user surveys and that there was a fair amount of community involvement that they built on in this process.

Ms. Wilson asked what happens now that the report is done. Mr. Block answered that before proceeding with any of the physical recommendations they would need to be taken out to the community. He added that this public step is the next one. Mr. Nellams added that there is kind of two track process going on with the Task Force report. The first aspect is that the report advises the Mayor who then incorporates some of the proposals into his 2007/2008 budget and then the second aspect regarding the physical plan and the capital projects and how they will be funded. This latter part will be much more public.

Commissioner Fiori questioned about the finances. He noted that it looks like some programs make money and some lose money. He wondered how the Center keeps individual programs accountable and couldn't there be some advantage to splitting these up and having them be their own operating entities. Mr. Block stated that the policy has been very deliberate to look at the different programs and ask whether they should be publicly subsidized or whether it generates money to subsidize others. He added that all programs are operated by groups outside of Seattle Center and there is a deliberate variation between what is subsidized and what a revenue generating program is. Mr. Nellams added that some of the strictly commercial activities should be evaluated on what the bottom line is. He added that the Center, though, is part of the social sector and ultimately not a bottom line business. Mr. Nellams noted that what they are measuring is whether or not they are reaching their mission. He stated that they like to say that they are redefining community everyday with their unique grouping of facilities and events. He added that if the public feels the Center is reaching its mission then it is worth supporting.

Commissioner Pennington noted that that is a normal model for city-run entities. Mr. Block replied that there is sensitivity to the word "subsidy".

Commissioner Martin Kaplan asked what happened to the \$20 million gained in the sale of property to the Gates Foundation. Mr. Nellams reported that they have not yet received that money. Commissioner Kaplan then asked what it was earmarked for. Mr. Nellams responded that \$10 million will go to the City for debt repayment and \$8 million will go to capital projects.

Mr. Block pointed out that in every year that there was a surplus the City Council would cut back the Center's budget but every year there was debt incurred the City Council would require payback with interest. He noted that he is unaware of any other department in the City that has ever been faced with that financial set up.

Chair Sheehy thanked Robert Nellams and Bill Block for their time.

▪ **Project & Legislative Updates**

o **Detached ADU Update (Sheehy)**

Chair Sheehy reported that the City Council's Urban Design and Planning committee will be hosting a public hearing on June 27 and that he and Commissioner Michelle Mattox will be there. He added that they are pushing the DADU legislation very hard.

o **South Lake Union Urban Center Plan (Kaplan)**

Commissioner Kaplan reported that last week DPD hosted had the final public meeting on the preliminary plan for South Lake Union. He added that most of the questions centered on pedestrian

access, vehicular conflict with bicycles, property values for rezoning, and preservation of views. Mr. Dvorak added that they are going to take the public comments from that night and finalize their plan and then ultimately plan on having legislation to City Council in the fall.

Commissioner Kinast asked if they talked about the industrial areas. Mr. Dvorak stated that it did not come up in any of the discussion. Ms. Wilson noted that DPD would need a Comp Plan amendment first and the City has been debating whether they are going to bring that amendment forward for the IC this year or if they are going to wait for next year.

O Adult Cabaret Legislation (Wilson)

Ms. Wilson reported that the ad hoc committee is putting together a draft response to City Council that the full commission will review. She added that they had originally hoped to have that completed by the end of June but it now seems likely that that will not happen. They hope to bring a draft back to one of the next Full Commission meetings for discussion and a possible vote. Ms. Wilson noted that the committee has been looking at the questions posed by Councilmember Steinbrueck, essentially looking at three main options: what is in place now, what is the Mayor's proposal, and how city-wide dispersion with the buffers would work.

Chair Sheehy noted that since this proposed legislation is not motivated by legal needs, but is instead simply a change in policy, it is in the Commission's interest to take its time and conduct thorough research to make the best recommendation possible.

Chair Sheehy noted that staff is organizing a tour of the area that has been identified in the Mayor's proposal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 8:55 am.