



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 25, 2006
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Linda Amato, George Blomberg, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Kay Knapton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Kirsten Pennington, Carl See, Tony To

Commissioners Absent

Steve Sheehy – Chair, Hilda Blanco, Mahlon Clements

Commission Staff

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

Guests

Marija Ereminaitė, Ketil Freeman, Council Central Staff; McCabe Mooney, Piper Marckx, Lish Whitson, DPD;

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 7:30 am by Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Approve May 11, SPC Minutes

ACTION: Commissioner Tom Eanes moved that the May 11, 2006 minutes be approved. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the approval. The motion passed unanimously.

- Chair's Report

– **Upcoming Events and Meetings**

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that the Seattle Housing Authority is convening an advisory group to look at the update at Yesler Terrace. He added that they are looking for a volunteer who would be willing to act as the Planning Commission representative for this group. Vice-Chair Finrow continued that if any Commissioners were interested they should ask Ms. Wilson or Mr. Dvorak for details about the timeline and commitment.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that Commissioner Valerie Kinast has agreed to represent the Planning Commission on the Councilmember Rasmussen's Housing Advisory Group. He noted that Commissioner Michelle Mattox will act as the alternate.

Vice Chair Finrow thanked all the Commissioners who attended the SDOT Open House on replacing the Viaduct this week. Vice-Chair Finrow asked that those Commissioners who attended to please remember to send a paragraph update to Ms Wilson who will then send out a report to the full Commission

He noted that Commissioner Kirsten Pennington and he will be attending a student charrette at the University of Washington this week on the 15th and 41st street intersection and ways to the University more accessible to the Community.

– **Announcements and Reports**

Vice-Chair Finrow asked the Commissioners to review the upcoming meetings and events that are listed on the back of the agenda and noted the following;

- Executive Committee, HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FROM Tuesday, MAY 31 TO THURSDAY JUNE 1
- Housing, Neighborhood Planning and Urban Centers Committee Tuesday, June 6 and will hear more about the Green Factor and the Livable South Downtown EIS scoping.
- There will be an EIS Scoping Meeting for the Livable South Downtown plan on Thursday, June 1, 6:00pm – 7:30pm at Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, Cadillac Hotel Building Auditorium, corner of 2nd Avenue South and South Jackson Street.
- The next Full Commission Meeting will be Thursday, June 8, 3:00pm – 5:30pm here in this room.
- South Lake Union Urban Center Plan Update Open House on Monday, June 12th and will be the final community meeting to approve the updated neighborhood plan.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that the Chair had their monthly meeting with Director Diane Sugimura. He discussed having an update with the Commission about downtown livability to the agenda and that Director Sugimura agreed to give the Commission a complete update on the status at an upcoming Commission meeting.

- **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - **Review & Possible Approval of Viaduct op-Ed**

Ms. Wilson noted in the Commissioner's folders there is a matrix and that the Commissioners should take a moment to read this sheet over. Ms. Wilson noted that we are still planning on doing the op-ed with the Seattle Design Commission. Commissioner Chris Fiori added that the SPC needs to refine its position.

Ms. Wilson gave background on this issue for the benefit of the newer Commissioners. She noted that based on the review of the DEIS the Commission came out in support of the tunnel for the preferred alternative and that the Commission did not support an elevated structure. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission did not come out pro or con on the "no highway" option as there were very little details at that time. She added that the Commission did raise several issues of concern about with this option

namely the potential negative impacts to the downtown pedestrian environment and to livability impacts in the urban core. The Commission stated their apprehension about the financial viability of this concept and believed the practical considerations of funding need to be taken into account. Ms. Wilson stated that it would be most useful to spend some effort to get a clear opinion of what the position is of the Commission today and to state the priority points for an op-ed piece.

Commissioner Tom Eanes suggested contacting the papers to see if they might be willing to run two separate op-eds to run side by side, one from the Design Commission and one from the Seattle Planning Commission noting this would help with the word limit that the newspapers have on op-eds.

Commissioner Eanes also noted that there is a lot of misinformation and inaccuracies that should be addressed. Some of these issues he outlined included the experiences of other cities on removal of freeways, why it is technically not like the "big dig", and that the tunnel option is not all about opening up a huge portion of land along the waterfront.

Commissioner Blomberg added that economic outcome of each alternative continues to be missing. He also noted that the case needs to be made about the economic importance of this project regionally.

Commissioner Kinast wondered if it makes sense for the Planning Commission to do a more thorough examination of the no highway option. Commissioner Chris Fiori pointed out that studies have not been done and questioned whether they should. He noted that the Planning Commission supported the tunnel option after its review of the Draft EIS.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan stated that he was not equivocating. He added that he had attended one of the Viaduct replacement open houses and had a discussion with Steve Pearce and SDOT about the economics and the boulevard idea. Commissioner Kaplan stated that the boulevard would put an additional 60,000 cars on the grid today and by the time the work would be done they expect that there would be 175,000 trips a day with 60% being through trips. He added that it is SDOT's position that this will result in gridlock and could drive businesses away. Commissioner Kaplan mentioned that another thing the engineers talked about is the land that is to be redeveloped is just not there as WSDOT is taking it for utilities. He added that the Norquist examples are so totally different than our Viaduct.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated that one thing she would like to add on to Commissioner Kaplan's comments is to also consider the impact to I-5 as it is a freight corridor.

Commissioner Eanes noted this is also a downtown livability issue. He further added that one of the basic livability issues in Belltown, where City policy is to encourage additional residential development is the amount of traffic on 2nd and 4th streets and the noise, worsened air quality and other negative impacts. He added that he does think that no build option maybe should be studied in order to put it to rest one way or the other.

Commissioner Kay Knapton shared her concern that she feels that Seattle must acknowledge it is being driven by time constraints. She added that she is concerned that Councilmembers have suggested that the City could go back to the Legislature and ask for more time to allow Seattle to consider the alternatives. She stated her concern that such a plan ignores the political reality that the State Legislature is not sympathetic to the City of Seattle and there are other demands on transportation resources. Commissioner Knapton stated that if the City does not make a decision soon we are likely to lose the funding and end up turning the decision over the Governor.

Commissioner Linda Amato noted that the State is looking at a serious rehab of the existing structure and this was never part of the EIS. She added that if the Commission's evaluation was based on the EIS, that EIS was not deemed as legally sufficient so SDOT is doing a supplemental DEIS.

Commissioner Carl See stated that it might be good to mesh this issue with our industrial lands policies. He asked if the core tunnel plan could be done without asking for more money from the Seattle tax plan. Commissioner Fiori responded that there are some caveats with that. He stated that they were told that if the Port or the Army Corps of Engineers comes through with funds that might be available then there would not be any type of broad tax plan that would have to cover any gaps.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald questioned whether, if the tunnel option is not pursued, there would be a lost opportunity for synergy of replacing the seawall at the same time as the tunnel. Commissioner Kaplan noted that he had talked to an engineer about that and was told that with the stacked tunnel design there is the opportunity to integrate the seawall and tunnel more.

Ms. Wilson noted that no highway option is not a 'no cost' option. She noted that Councilmember David Della's letter to WashDOT asked if the funding would still be available for that option. The response from WashDOT stated no, they are only considering the two alternatives. She added that Councilmembers have implied that WashDOT has the authority to change that decision but she does not know whether or not that is completely true. Ms. Wilson continued that she believes that a lot of money that goes to WashDOT is actually stipulated (in some instances by voter mandate) to have to go to roads dollars. Commissioner Amato responded that any money from the gas tax has to go roadways.

Vice-Chair Finrow summarized the discussion. He suggested that this topic be discussed again at the next Executive meeting and that before the Commission proceeds with a letter or position statement it will be sent out via email so that all Commissioners can have a look at it and be able to voice any concerns. Vice-Chair Finrow noted that Commissioner's Kinast suggestion, as well as some of the other Commissioners, that our opinion change can be discussed at a future date.

o **Record SPC Approval of Industrial Lands Roundtable Report**

Note for the Record: No Commissioners present identified a potential conflict about which should be disclosed and no member present disclosed any known conflict of interest, private or financial, perceived or real on the issue of proposed adult cabaret legislation. Commissioner George Blomberg was not in the room for this discussion and vote.

ACTION: Commissioner Tony To moved that the Industrial Lands Roundtable report be approved. Commissioner Martin Kaplan seconded the approval. The motion passed unanimously.

▪ **PROJECT & LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:**

○ **520 Bridge DEIS**

Ms. Wilson noted that the 520 DEIS is scheduled to be released in early June and there will be a briefing at the next Commission meeting from the WashDOT on this topic. She added that there will be a 60 day review period.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that, when Council President Nick Licata came and talked about the critical issues surrounding the 520 bridge, he stated that he felt that the 520 bridge was a more serious problem than the Viaduct and added that this is an important issue for the Planning Commission to weigh in on.

○ **Detached ADU's**

Ms. Wilson stated that the legislation to allow DADU's in the SE portion of Seattle is being considered at City Council. She added that they have a couple meetings scheduled in June with a full vote by Council in July. Ms. Wilson noted that the letter that was approved by the Commission will be sent out today along with the White Paper. She added that she felt it would be good to have a Commissioner to attend the hearing and make a statement.

Vice-Chair Finrow commented that we were asked by DPD to help develop some ideas for a technical advisory group that would help people who want to develop Detached ADU's on their property. Vice-Chair Finrow stated that they do have a group that has been working on that but they have been waiting to see if this is going to be a real thing or not. He added that it is looking more and more that it will be.

○ **Westside Corridor**

Commissioner George Blomberg reported that on May 18th the Land Use and transportation committee had a briefing from Calvin Chow from SDOT on the Ballard West Seattle Corridor study. He stated that they see these corridor investments as having important outcomes from a planning perspective. Commissioner Blomberg noted that he is unclear about the Ballot initiative (Transit Now) in the fall and how that will impact these corridor improvements. He also wondered how the Mayor's proposed 1.8 billion dollar transportation improvement package would fit into this effort. Vice-Chair Finrow asked if the Commission could get an update on Mayor Greg Nickels' and King County Executive Ron Sims' proposals.

Commissioner Eanes offered the observation that we have the Mayor's proposal, Ron Sims' proposal, the 520 and the Viaduct and he wonders how we look at one without looking at all of them.

○ **Neighborhood Business District Strategy**

Lish Whitson, from DPD, reported the only thing that has really happened with City Council on this since he last updated the Planning Commission is that there is a new staff person working on it, Geri Beardsley. He noted that on June 14 the UDP Council committee is planning to discuss this. He added that the three remaining issues that they will be discussing are: parking, mapping pedestrian destinations in 6 neighborhoods, and landscaping & open space requirements.

Commissioner Eanes asked about the status of the mapping effort. Mr. Whitson replied that they are waiting until they know what the Council decision is with regard to the pedestrian designations before they start talking to communities about where we want those designations to apply.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **Briefing – South Lake Union Urban Center Plan**
- Lish Whitson, Department of Planning and Development

Mr. Whitson started his briefing by noting that DPD will be sponsoring a final community meeting and asked if the Planning Commission might offer a volunteer facilitator for the Q & A session at the June 12th meeting. Vice Chair Finrow stated that they would get back to him with a name of a Commissioner who will act as the facilitator.

Mr. Whitson went over the proposed goals and policies that will adopt into the Comp Plan and proposed the strategies to get the goals and policies implemented. Mr. Whitson noted that they have been building the new Neighborhood Plan on the vision that was laid out in the 1998 Neighborhood Plan. He noted that design guidelines for the neighborhood has six different sub areas identified and they question whether these areas are still relevant.

Comment: akward...

Mr. Whitson noted that they are looking a Comp Plan amendment to change the designation on the future land use map that will allow housing in areas zoned for industrial use. He noted that currently they are not seeing any traditional industrial use in the area and what's happening there now is geared towered light industrial uses. They are proposing that the area be rezoned to Seattle Mixed which would allow for housing in addition to the current light industrial and commercial uses.

He noted that some of the neighborhood goals identified in the planning process are affordable housing, schools, arts & culture, and preservation of some historic buildings. He noted that there are 10 landmarks and some other potential ones. Mr. Whitson stated that they are limited in the tools they have to meet these goals. The major tool is available is zoning incentives. He added that they are looking at incentives for height/density to obtain some of the key community goals.

Mr. Whitson noted that the other issues are improvements for bike/pedestrian, transit, street (SLU transportation study) and the north downtown park plan.

Mr. Whitson commented that they are not currently looking at bringing the Seattle Green Factor to the neighborhood now but are saying that idea is something to consider in the future. He added that this neighborhood is a leader in LEED projects.

Mr. Whitson reported that they have some public view corridors in the neighborhoods that are used for SEPA purposes. They have been asked to identify some view corridors that are key. He added that they will be showing about six different options at the community forum for input.

Commissioner To asked about the height and whether increases in height would be related to TDR or some kind of bonus program and not zoning. Mr. Whitson responded yes.

Commissioner McDonald asked about the transportation issue and if there were any discussions of connections to the east over I-5. Mr. Whitson replied that most likely in the short term they will link it

via the bus on Lakeview Blvd. He added that they would like to see the connection move forward but currently there is not a way to do this.

Vice-Chair Finrow noted that he was pleased to see the studies and the visual mock ups showing the varying height alternatives.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if he had seen the Car America proposal and he wondered if there was anything besides design review that would inspire something different than a "Bellevue Business Park". Mr. Whitson answered that he was aware that they were tracking the ideas of potential height increases in that area and right now they would only be for residential uses. He added that he was not sure how fast they were moving. Mr. Whitson noted that most of what they are proposing is under current zoning.

Ms. Wilson asked Mr. Whitson to go through the decision points and the different places where the Commission might have a role in weighing in. She asked if most of the decisions on the table would happen through the Comp Plan Amendment process. Mr. Whitson replied that they would be submitting the Comp Plan Amendment proposal and will forward a resolution to the City Council that includes a more narrative based plan document. He added that it will be released at this open house and there will be some opportunity for folks to comment on that. Mr. Whitson stated that in the second half of June the Commission may want look at that document and provide comments.

Vice-Chair Finrow thanked Mr. Whitson.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Finrow adjourned the meeting at 8:56 am.