



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 10, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair - Josh Brower, Vice-Chair Leslie Miller, Linda Amato, Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Christopher Persons, Matt Roewe, Michelle Zeidman

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer, Michael Pickford-intern

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Mark Johnson, Marty Kaplan

IN ATTENDANCE

Nathan Torgelson, Department of Finance; Andrea Petzel, Department of Planning and Development; John Kane, BINMIC; Amanda Sparr

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

Chair Josh Brower called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. He thanked Commissioner Zeidman for her service and introduced Amanda Sparr, the new Get-Engaged Commissioner. Commissioner Zeidman said a few words about her time with the Commission and noted that she would be honored to serve again. Ms. Sparr introduced herself and said that she looks forward to serving with the Commission this year.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

ACTION: Vice Chair Miller moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Amato seconded the motion. The minutes approved by 13 affirmative votes and one abstention from Commissioner Knapton.

▪ **Chair's Report** - Commission Chair Josh Brower

Chair Brower provided a brief update on recent Commission activities: letters were sent to City Council on both the proposed Backyard Cottage legislation and changes to the Multifamily Code related to mid-rise and high-rise zones; Commissioner Cutler attended an open house make-up session for the Central Area. Chair Brower noted the upcoming meetings. On the subject of Backyard Cottages, Chair Brower encouraged Commissioners to attend the public hearing and speak in favor of the proposed legislation and the Commission's recommendations related to the height and size permitted for the cottages. Vice Chair Miller and Commissioners Johnson and Persons said they would attend.

BRIEFINGS & DISCUSSION

▪ **Discussion: Industrial Lands**

Recusal & Disclosure:

- Chair Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, works with clients who own and develop properties in industrial lands.

Chair Brower provided a brief overview of the Commission's work on industrial lands and noted that a number of new Commissioners have joined since this work was completed. Ms. Wilson introduced Nathan Torgelson, with the Executive Office, and Andrea Petzel, with DPD, both of whom have worked on policies related to industrial lands. Ms. Wilson then provided additional description of the Commission's own work.

[Please see the Commission's website: <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/industrial.htm> and its report: [The Future of Seattle's Industrial Lands](#) for more information.]

Commissioner Finrow noted that while some owners of industrial land would like to see their property rezoned, the long-term consequences would include eroding our local job base, particularly for non-college educated people. He indicated that the experts who visited Seattle from Portland, San Francisco and Chicago all extolled the unique and valuable characteristics of Seattle's industrial lands, especially their excellent access transportation via freeways, railroads, and Elliott Bay. Commissioner Finrow also explained that Vancouver, B.C. had transformed industrial lands close to its downtown into a mixed-use neighborhood and has subsequently had a very serious problem with reverse-commuting. He then reiterated the importance of protecting industrial land and stated that the Commission should not recommend rezones without a clear demonstration of how they would benefit Seattle as a whole.

Commissioner McDonald said that while Seattle was exploring ways to protect its industrial lands, Bellevue was taking the opposite approach with the Bel-Red Corridor, which does not have the same level of access to transportation as Seattle's industrial areas. He did, however, reiterate the importance of the Commission holding firm to the position that industrial lands should not be rezoned without a clear, city-wide policy for protecting the industrial jobs base.

Commissioner Fiori added that in addition to the Commission's work, City agencies including DPD and OPM have done a lot of work to inventory and protect the city's industrial jobs and businesses. He also reiterated that the City needs a clear policy rationale for when and where it would be appropriate to rezone industrial lands. He noted that it will be important to think creatively about how to accommodate growth while supporting industrial activity.

Vice Chair Miller noted that [The Future of Industrial Lands](#) report was her introduction to the Commission. She joined the other commissioners in citing the need for a clear, overarching rationale for rezoning industrial lands, particularly because the topic comes up every year through the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment process.

Commissioner Hough-Beck noted that she was new to the Commission when she attended the workshops that formed the basis of the Commission's work on industrial lands and noted that a lot of attendees really stressed their belief that once a city loses industrial land, it can never get it back. She also related that her experience touring Seattle's industrial areas really clarified the importance of connections to railroads, the port, and freeways, which are key infrastructure components that many other cities do not have.

Commissioner Knapton observed that while people typically refer to parks and the natural environment as the 'gems' of Seattle, the city's rail lines, port, and freeways really enhance the ability to move goods and products around and that our industrial lands are gems of the city, too. She also noted that it is important to maintain an industrial job base so that the city does not become one of haves and have-nots.

Mr. Torgelson thanked the Commission for their work and indicated that it had provided a good foundation for the Executive's recommendations. He also emphasized the importance of industrial jobs. He noted that OED has updated their basic industry and maritime study and has done a lot of work assisting existing businesses in industrial lands.

- **Briefing: Planning Director update**
 - Ray Gastil, DPD

Chair Brower welcomed Mr. Gastil and congratulated him on his one year anniversary as Planning Director. Mr. Gastil briefly outlined the upcoming meetings for the Neighborhood Plan Updates in three southeast neighborhoods and noted that draft recommendations would be available on-line soon. He indicated that the team is on-schedule to complete the plan updates by the end of the year. [Please see the [Neighborhood Plan Updates website](#) for more information.] Mr. Gastil explained that the City is trying to improve communication among its departments and agencies so that it can work with the community in a more coherent manner to identify realistic, achievable goals. Commissioners then asked a few questions about the logistics; Mr. Gastil clarified that we was referring to the upcoming meetings for neighborhood plan updates not the upcoming meetings for the status reports. Ms. Wilson noted that Lyle Bicknell, who is the Neighborhood Planning Manager, has been invited to an upcoming Commission meeting to discuss this topic further, after the next round of neighborhood plan update meetings has been completed. Ms. Wilson asked Mr. Gastil about the implementation process for the plan updates. Mr. Gastil responded that although implementation is scheduled to begin during the first quarter of 2010, there could be delays related to the change in executive administration.

Commissioner Finrow asked if any of the mayoral candidates had participated in the plan update process. Mr. Gastil responded that, to the best of his knowledge, none had participated.

- **Discussion: Findings from Neighborhood Status Reports & Process**

Ms. Wilson began by noting that the summary report of the neighborhood breakout discussions is very close to being finished. She reminded the Commissioners that the 'mini' reports from the on-line questionnaire responses have all been compiled and sent out as part of their assignment to compare the neighborhood discussion and questionnaire responses, which will be used for an executive summary.

She said that the Commissioners should be very proud of their work – it is a treasure trove of information about the neighborhoods.

Commissioners discussed how to summarize the questionnaire responses and were reminded that their work is only one part of the larger process. Ultimately, DPD and DON staff will use the summaries from the Planning Commission, NPAC and the verbatim questionnaire responses to establish a list of 12 key priorities for each of the 24 neighborhoods, which will then be voted on in the next round of meetings. Ms. Wilson reminded Commissioners that all of the ‘raw data’ will be publicly available for others to review and interpret for themselves.

The Commission then began to discuss potential findings and recommendations for the overall process of the Neighborhood Plan Status Reports. Ms. Wilson presented a draft letter of findings and recommendations. Commissioners discussed the relative value of the draft Status Reports. Ms. Wilson noted that while the reports would be finalized based on feedback heard at the open house meetings and from responses to the questionnaire, not all of the suggested changes will be made. Commissioners also discussed how they could act as stewards for the individual neighborhoods that they worked with at the open house meetings to ensure that the City responds in a meaningful way to their needs. Ms. Wilson explained that the intention of the second round of meetings will be to both confirm the key priorities of the neighborhoods and identify how the City can work with the community to achieve them. She explained that the Executive Summary, currently being prepared, would provide key highlights about each of the 24 neighborhoods from the Commission’s perspective.

Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of ranking neighborhoods in terms of which should be next in line for neighborhood plan updates. They agreed that rankings might create more problems than they would solve, particularly considering that there might not be funding for future updates

Commissioner Fiori suggested that the draft letter of recommendations should be rearranged so that the key recommendations would be at the beginning of the letter and comments about the process at the end. He also suggested that the Commission think strategically about how to update the neighborhood plans, particularly because not all of them need to be updated. Commissioner McDonald suggested that the Comprehensive Plan amendment process could be used for more specific updates to neighborhood plans where a complete update is not required. Vice Chair Miller agreed with Commissioner McDonald. She suggested that education is a key component both to clarify the process of neighborhood planning and to articulate the connection between increased density and neighborhood amenities. She asked – what are achievable goals; what worked and what didn’t in neighborhood planning? Commissioner Knapton agreed that it would be important to keep the revision process moving forward and to keep people informed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Josh Brower adjourned at 5:29.