



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Leslie Miller, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 13, 2012
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Kadie Bell Sata, Catherine Benotto, Josh Brower, Grace Cho* Colie Hough-Beck, Bradley Khouri, Chris Persons, Matt Roewe, Morgan Shook, Sarah Snider

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Luis F. Borrero, David Cutler, Mark Johnson, Jeanne Krikawa, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Executive Director, Diana Canzoneri-Senior Analyst, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative

Guests

Marshall Foster, Radhika Nair, DPD

* Not yet confirmed

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

Commissioner Josh Brower called the meeting to attention at 3:00 pm.

- **Approve: August 23, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

ACTION: Commissioner Sarah Snider moved to approve the August 23, 2012 minutes. Commissioner Morgan Shook seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

- **Chair's Report**
 - Commissioner Josh Brower

Commissioner Brower reviewed the upcoming meetings and events. Commissioner Brower mentioned a letter that will be going out concerning the downtown schools. Ms. Wilson noted that Diana Canzoneri will be taking the lead on composing the letter and that the timing will be ahead of the SLU recommendations.

Ms. Wilson mentioned the new Get Engaged Commissioner, Grace Cho noting that she would not be confirmed until October 26.

Ms. Wilson talked about the freight master plan and that there is some money for a port access study. She suggested that the Commission write a letter to advocate for them to move forward on a freight master plan as it would be advantageous to do them together.

Ms. Wilson also mentioned the arena and noted that it would be interesting to hear the take of the MOU. She added that the fund for transportation improvements is \$40 million but that she has not gotten all of the details. Ms. Wilson continued that there was some talk about the idea of Port Overlay District.

Commissioner Brower asked Grace Cho to introduce herself. Ms. Cho stated that she is relatively new to Seattle and is excited to serve on the Commission. She shared that her background is in urban planning and that she is passionate about transportation and land use.

- **Planning Director Report**
 - DPD, Director of City Planning, Marshall Foster

Commissioner Brower welcomed Marshall Foster.

Mr. Foster stated that it is a busy time for city planning in Seattle. He noted that regarding the arena, they are going to be doing significant work later this year and early next year in the MIC and the stadium transition area overlay district. He added that a port overlay might be appropriate to consider. Mr. Foster stated that he is interested in land use code revisions and the process for rezoning industrial land to make it more difficult to change land from industrial to commercial.

Mr. Foster reported that Yesler Terrace was adopted and that this was a great model for how DPD works with Council staff noting that it was a strong partnership and yielded a huge benefit.

Mr. Foster stated that the Shoreline Master Program update has been submitted and there are a few small issues regarding house barges. He added that they are pushing for council action in the fall and that their hope is to get it to Department of Ecology early enough that they might have some action in early 2013.

Mr. Foster noted that the Mayor has signed the South Lake Union legislation and that there is a continuing discussion regarding a downtown school. He added that there is \$5 million to secure space in an existing building downtown. He noted that they are working with DSA, the school board, etc.

Mr. Foster talked about some upcoming projects, including Northgate. He noted that they will be working with Via Architecture to do the next phase of urban design framework and that the hope is that it would tee up a development agreement and a multi-year phased TOD, hopefully in partnership with the Housing Authority. Mr. Foster continued that the market is not very ripe for high-rise TOD and that maybe it would allow for phased mid-rise and possibly capture potential for subsequent phases.

Mr. Foster also mentioned that he was very happy with how the Capitol Hill development agreement term sheet turned out. He felt that it was an exciting piece of work and that it should be heard at Council in December.

Mr. Foster stated that they are working with the Commission to finalize the proposal regarding transit communities for the Comp Plan amendments. He noted that September 24 is the new deadline.

Commissioner Hough Beck asked about the waterfront. Mr. Foster replied that the Mayor and Council have endorsed the concept and strategic plans. He added that the seawall bond measure is the first on the ballot. Mr. Foster noted that they have hired a team to help implement the local improvement district. He continued that they are moving the design from concept to preliminary (10% - 30% design).

Commissioner Persons asked for more detail regarding the public-private development agreement for the waterfront blocks in South Lake Union. Mr. Foster stated that he felt that he should wait until the Mayor could lay it out. He noted that they are working with the Office of Housing to secure land to do housing.

Commissioner Roewe stated that it took a while to revise the draft for the Shoreline Master Program and he wondered if there was anything new about enabling uses around the lake to better respond to the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Foster answered that it does clarify what uses are permitted. He added that South Lake Union is an 'urban stable' environment and they are making it 'urban commercial'. He continued that they are working closely with the Port regarding historic maritime uses, shipyards and other technical issues.

Mr. Foster talked about the emergency restrictions on small lot houses and noted that development on small lots is great but if you have a small lot, you need a small house. Ms. Wilson asked what the timeline was. Mr. Foster answered that it was the 1st quarter of 2013 and that they have mapped the permits but will have to do a lot of research to identify the affected lots. Radhika Nair added that the original platting was an arcane process. Commissioner Persons wondered how developers are finding these lots. Mr. Foster responded that some have remnant structures. Commissioner Benotto clarified that it affects all lots less than 3750 square feet and that there are existing homes on SF-5000 lots of that size and smaller. She asked if it would affect renovations. Mr. Foster replied that it would not. He added that it is about new construction and the plat.

Commissioner Brower thanked Mr. Foster for his time.

- **Briefing: Comp Plan Urban Design Element**
 - DPD, City Planning Office, Radhika Nair

Ms. Wilson explained that the comp plan update is happening incrementally and will include a new urban design element. She noted that the Executive Committee had a preview of this a few months ago. She added that the timeline for this is that it will be to Council in January and voted on in March.

Commissioner Brower welcomed Radhika Nair.

Ms. Nair gave a little bit of background for context. She explained that DPD was approached by the AIA who noted that Seattle is the only city of its size that does not have an Urban Design Element and they volunteered to help.

Ms. Nair walked the Commission through a power point presentation that can be accessed here:

http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/docs/SPC_2012_0913.pdf

Commissioner Shook wondered how it would really work or be used. Ms. Nair stated that it includes things we do anyway but it would explicitly say to use streets as transportation and natural infrastructure. She added that building with nature would be how the policy would shake out. Ms. Nair noted that it would use height to provide focus. Commissioner Shook asked about foundational theory and the guidance for design review. Ms. Nair responded that the urban design policy would be to maximize public access. Commissioner Shook asked if this would be mostly through design review. Ms. Nair stated that it would provide context for urban design frameworks and the concentration of uses might guide where we draw out P-zones.

Commissioner Hough Beck asked if it would cover both public and private realms. Ms. Nair answered both but added that most of the policies that have more teeth might be about streets and public infrastructure. Commissioner Hough Beck asked about public spaces and bringing in necessary and essential components to make great places. Ms. Nair replied that the element talks about how we should increase canopy but does defer to the Urban Forest management plan.

Commissioner Benotto asked about the relationship between building heights and hills, the current zoning does not consider this and would that recommendation guide future rezones. Ms. Nair stated that at the Comp Plan level it is unlikely that the policy would be more than conceptual. She added that it also looked at density across a pattern without adding height in some areas. Commissioner Benotto asked if it would change the City's comp plan metrics for open space, for example adding more open space than we currently have? Ms. Nair replied that the comp plan currently focuses on quantity and access. She added that it does not address quality.

Commissioner Roewe thanked Ms. Nair for taking this on and stated that sometimes these big idea urban design principles work against you as much as they do for you. He suggested being careful that they are not too simple. Ms. Nair agreed that it is hard.

Commissioner Cho wondered if the stakeholder agreement had mostly been through AIA. Ms. Nair replied that it had. Commissioner Cho wondered if there had put any feelers out there with the development community. Ms. Nair said that they had talked to the public but that they had not engaged the development community yet. Commissioner Cho stated that it seems like this element reinforces what is already there and is not a drastic change. Ms. Nair agreed but noted that the Comp Plan sometimes does not take it one-step further and this would.

Commissioner Shook stated that in some ways design could be twisted and he wondered how to create a balance. Ms. Nair responded that currently it is fairly focused on physical form.

Commissioner Brower wondered if there was an opportunity to take the work that Radhika is doing and use it to replace and eliminate the redundancies in other parts of the Comp Plan. Ms. Nair replied that it would be possible to eliminate some of the vagueness and the redundancies but it would also add some things. Commissioner Brower asked if she saw changes in the LUC from this element. Ms. Nair replied that they have not talked about that yet but are going through the Comp Plan to figure out where to add the policies and identify the redundancies.

Commissioner Khouri asked what the thinking was behind keeping it as an independent element or finding a way to take more information and distribute it throughout the Comp Plan. Ms. Nair answered that they originally started doing a comprehensive overhaul all at once, incrementally, and it started out as a separate element. She added that when it is not a stand-alone element it seems a bit more complicated.

Commissioner Brower noted that this is the work they have been doing, going through existing policies and changing them and this is the problem with a piecemeal approach. Ms. Nair stated that the work is fantastic and it shows what should stay and what should go. Ms. Wilson stated that in regards to the Seattle Transit Communities that it has been hard to do it this way but it is a budget issue. Commissioner Brower stated that it is rehabilitation versus building new. Commissioner Khouri stated that if it were created as a proactive element he would like to see the Commission be visionary and figure out a way to make it fit into the new process, as it would be a loss to distribute it throughout.

Ms. Wilson stated that when she looks at the report and the policies, the background report is fundamental to being able to show what we are talking about and the Comp Plan just does not do that. She added that it is written differently and might be stronger if it holds together. Ms. Wilson noted that she could not really vision how this could be distributed and retain the quality. Commissioner Khouri agreed and stated that it would increase redundancies. Commissioner Brower stated that it is facing political hurdles as no one wants to see this come up during the election cycle and that is why the Commission is proposing the Seattle Transit Communities amendment but we do have the new tools to build a new plan.

Commissioner Khouri asked if there was a possibility that we could have some robust public outreach and hold on to this and wait for the major overhaul of the Comp Plan. Commissioner Brower replied that there is no budget for outreach. Ms. Wilson stated that, since we have to do an incremental approach, maybe leading with this is not a bad thing. Ms. Nair stated that they are proposing many changes with the Seattle Transit Communities and the urban design element and having both together is a good package.

Commissioner Snider suggested setting the stage with something very simple, easy to read and to follow. Ms. Nair noted that other elements like this have been more effective at preventing rather than promoting and she wondered if that is how the UDE will be used.

Commissioner Brower thanked Ms. Nair for her time.

- **Discussion: transit communities Comp Plan amendment**
 - Comp Plan Special Task Force & SPC Staff

Commissioner Brower noted that the new deadline on this is September 24 and then it goes into the Council process. He added that the process with this is interesting as the Commission is usually reviewing other people's proposed amendments. Commissioner Brower mentioned that, generally, the Commission, DPD and Council Central staffs are all in line.

Ms. Wilson explained the draft and the process that created the draft noting that we are not replacing urban village boundaries but applying real development standards. She added that the final decision was that getting rid of all the urban village boundaries would be too unsettling to do in one fell swoop. Ms. Wilson stated that this is working to help enhance our urban village strategy, which has been about accommodating growth. She noted that this is focused on how we optimize transit investment.

Commissioner Morgan asked how far do we need to push this and how do we frame it.

Commissioner Brower noted that they do not actually designate any communities in this round but it is the first step to get the framework in the Comp Plan. He added that this document is the result of many hours of discussions going over this repeatedly with DPD staff. Commissioner Roewe asked which DPD staff. Commissioner Brower noted that it has been Diane, Marshall and Patrice and that this has to move forward.

Ms. Wilson went over the process and the timeline noting that the Commission has one more meeting to finalize this.

Commissioner Roewe stated that there has been a lot of discussion about the STC replacing the urban villages and he clarified that all urban villages are transit communities but not all transit communities are urban villages. He added that leveraging the investment in those places is where it is really lacking. Commissioner Brower talked about the reasons behind this noting that the Seattle Transit Communities strategy applies in a lot more places and there is no reason to take on the battle regarding urban villages as this strategy is better.

Ms. Wilson acknowledged that a STC overlay could replace station area overlays so that you could get rid of that concept and have transit community overlay. She added that as they do planning the boundaries could change. Commissioner Brower stated that the stations at Rainier Beach, Greenwood and the University District are three types of scenarios.

Ms. Wilson stated that there needs to be a much broader community discussion about what could happen in that geography. She questioned what the policies are could single-family zoning look different. Ms. Wilson suggested that addressing the 65' problems with the first floor, parking standards, different rezone criteria, these are the end game and the STC proposal sets that up. She added that there was push back from DPD about a long goal that defines transit communities.

Ms. Wilson then walked the Commission through the document and the process.

Commissioner Shook asked about the flexibility needed to respond to the transient nature of transit. Ms. Wilson responded that the urban village transit network has not changed. Commissioner Shook asked how they should think about the corridors. Ms. Wilson stated that frequency, span of service, etc. are all wrapped up in the methodology. Mr. Shook wondered if they needed to say something about discouraging pulling back on transit funding. Ms. Wilson agreed that this was a good point and that they should think about where to include it.

Commissioner Hough Beck noted that in the industrial jobs center that an 8- hour day is not accurate as it is more than 8 hours. She added that longshoremen could be there all night. Commissioner Brower stated that all the language that is in red has been proposed by DPD. Commissioner Hough Beck stated that she is not happy with it.

Commissioner Benotto asked about additional changes to the language in LU59 and if "low-scale" meant low-rise - that single family could only be rezoned to low-rise. She wondered if a situation where a really long sliver of single-family comes into a transit community walkshed, it might be appropriate to rezone some of it to mid-rise, not just all low-rise. Commissioner Benotto suggested striking low-scale. Commissioner Khouri stated that low-scale single-family is redundant. Ms. Wilson stated that this is the land use rezone criteria for all single-family and they need to create a special exception for transit communities to allow more variety of development.

Commissioner Shook asked about the second bullet conditions under LU59. Ms. Sheehy explained those conditions. Commissioner Brower suggested a way to significantly rewrite it.

Commissioner Bell stated that the compatibility with single-family is a problem too.

Commissioner Khouri wondered if, under the goals, LUG62, if there was a reason that the essential needs does not include open space. Ms. Wilson answered that we need to talk about the essential components of livability and more about service. She added that she saw his point. Commissioner Brower noted that would be easy to add. Commissioner Snider suggested the wording - access to recreational space.

Ms. Wilson asked the Commission to send any comments to the staff by the end of the day, Monday.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brower adjourned the meeting at 5:37 pm.