



# City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

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## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 22, 2005 Approved Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners in Attendance:** Steve Sheehy – Chair, Jerry Finrow – Vice-Chair, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Lyn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To

**Commissioners Absent:** Tom Eanes, John Owen

**Commission Staff:** Barbara Wilson – Director, Scott Dvorak – Planning Analyst

**Guests:** Carl See - Get Engaged Commissioner for 2005/2006, Susan McLain – DPD, Gordon Clowers – DPD, Neal Powers – Councilmember Steinbrueck's Office

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 a.m. by Chair Steve Sheehy.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

#### **Approval of September 8, 2005 Minutes**

**ACTION:** Vice Chair Finrow moves that the minutes be approved. Commissioner Sheridan seconds the approval. The motion to approve passes unanimously.

#### **Introduction of Carl See**

Chair Sheehy introduces Carl See, the Seattle Planning Commission Get Engaged Commissioner for the 2005/2006 academic year. Carl introduces himself stating that he is a recent graduate of the Evans School at the University of Washington specializing in urban affairs. He notes that he is a native of Seattle and is interested in staying in the area now that he has graduated and is looking forward to being involved with the Planning Commission.

#### **Upcoming Seattle Planning Commission Meetings**

Chair Sheehy directed Commissioners to note the upcoming meetings listed on the back of the agenda. He pointed out the 2005 revised meeting schedule noting that there have been changes to the Executive and HNUC committee meetings in December. In addition, our normally scheduled second meeting in November is on Thanksgiving. Instead we have rescheduled the meeting for November 17. Chair Sheehy noted that this fall, our focus will be on the review of the Downtown height and Density Review by Spaxman and Beasley and on the Center City Strategy, the industrial lands roundtable in November, and DADU legislation.

## **Chairs' meeting with Diane Sugimura**

Chair Sheehy reported that he and Vice Chair Finrow, along with Barbara Wilson had their monthly check in with Diane Sugimura. The topics included a request for SPC support on the DADU plan book and technical support, request from Council for Commission support and Downtown Zoning and Center City/Urban Livability issues, and the Commissions work with DPD staff on Northgate Housing and Zoning.

### **▪ Downtown Height and Density**

Chair Sheehy reported that he has requested that Vice-Chair Finrow and Commissioner Blanco work on a “tutorial” for the Downtown height and Density Review by Spaxman and Beasley. He also noted the following; their goal is to have their analysis finished before Thanksgiving. The Commission plans on discussing it at our meetings in November. Councilmember Steinbrueck’s staff, the Mayor’s office, and DPD staff are sorting through the review now and working together. The City Council will develop a separate paper identifying their issues dealing with livability in the Center City area. We will be tracking that process as well as identifying our own issues.

Vice-Chair Finrow indicated that he and Commissioner Blanco will be meeting next week to continue their analysis. They will be looking at how Vancouver has fared under its zoning program, identifying differences between Vancouver and Seattle, review the Mayor’s legislation, and then develop a series of questions to ask City Council as they consider the legislation.

Chair Sheehy noted that he did attend the recent public hearing on this issue and delivered the Planning Commission thoughts to City Council. Chair Sheehy made the following report; Even though the Commission had submitted their comments in writing earlier, Councilmember Steinbrueck noted that the Commission had made the effort to attend the hearing. Councilmember Steinbrueck mentioned to Diane Sugimura that he appreciated what we are doing and wanted to make sure that our efforts were included in DPD staff’s work.

### **▪ DADUs**

Chair Sheehy reported that DADU legislation (For SE Seattle) is on its way. He noted that it is being reviewed by the City legal department now. Although the Planning Commission has long held that a Technical Assistance manual/book should accompany DADU legislation adoption, we made it clear that we believe the manual/book can be developed separately later – that getting the legislation adopted was most important and that the timing of the accompanying piece was a separate issue.

### **▪ Recruitment**

Chair Sheehy reported we have begun recruiting for new members for 2006. Press release has been issued by the Mayor’s office. Our deadline is October 14<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged each Commissioner get involved in recruitment.

### **▪ Multifamily Code Rewrite Project**

Commissioners reported the large meeting in September went well. Commissioner Sheridan made note that there was much talk of affordable housing and density; however, many of the neighborhood participants didn’t really want the associated things that go with that. Commissioner Finrow mentioned that there was a lot of talk about Design Review. Once suggestion was that there should be review of Design Review. Chair Sheehy then indicated that DPD staff will have a concept paper completed by the end of the year with legislative work to be done in 2006.

## Committee Reports

### ▪ Land Use and Transportation Committee

Commissioner Blomberg made the following report;

The Committee is looking forward to the industrial lands roundtable in November. The committee is working to make sure that we have the right people at the table and we need to identify speakers. At the last committee meeting we also heard about the waterfront concept plan development and Washington State Ferries (WSF) current thinking about its Colman Dock plans. WSF's plans are going to give us something different than we have their currently – it will be a mixed use, public space in addition to a functional ferry terminal. He reported that Guillermo Romano described the waterfront concept plan process and all seems to be moving along nicely on that project. Committee members brought up a concern about a lack of connections to downtown – in terms of transportation links. Commissioner Sheridan said that discussing Colman Dock reminded her that the shoreline planning process is underway or would soon be underway and needed to be completed by 2009. Changes at Colman Dock have major planning implications for the entire waterfront. We should think about how we might review that project.

### ▪ Housing, Neighborhood, and Urban Centers Committee

Since Commissioner Eanes could not make it to the meeting today, Vice-Chair Finrow provided the following report on the HNUC committee. At its last meeting, the committee discussed the recent Multifamily Code Rewrite Project. The committee also had a brief conversation about the 2006 work plan and then discussed the South Downtown study. Vice-Chair Finrow mentioned that Yesler Terrace was next on the list of projects for the Seattle Housing Authority and that the Commission should investigate the status of that project to understand how it fits in with the South Downtown study and the Center City Seattle strategy. Detached accessory dwelling units were also discussed at the committee meeting as well as during the conversation with Diane Sugimura. Ms. Sugimura is very supportive of our role in developing guidelines to be used to assist people in developing DADUs. Tom Eanes has developed some material on this which we should use as a basis for our work. We also have the guidelines developed by Santa Cruz, CA to use as a model. Ms. Sugimura has suggested an interdepartmental team to work on this project, but that there would also need to be volunteer effort since there is no budget for this project in any City department. In addition to City departments we could also tap into resources at the AIA and other similar organizations.

## **REVIEW OF MONORAIL RIDERSHIP LETTER RE: FEEDER BUSES**

**Chair Sheehy recused himself from the conversation and left the room.**

Vice-Chair Finrow assumed the chairship for the conversation on our second letter to Councilmember Conlin on monorail ridership issues. He noted that the letter is intended to be an addendum to our first letter. A few small suggestions or editing we proposed

**ACTION: The SPC approved the letter to Councilmember Conlin on its review of monorail ridership letter with regard to feeder buses and directed the vice chair to finalize any edits and then to send the letter to Councilmember Conlin and the CC list.**

**Discussion ended and Chair Sheehy returned to the room and resumed chairship.**

## **COMMISSION BRIEFING: LIVABLE SOUTH DOWNTOWN**

Susan McLain and Gordon Clowers of the Department of Planning and Development were present to provide an update on the Livable South Downtown project they are managing. They made the following presentation.

Ms. McLain described the process they have been conducting with the South Downtown Advisory Group – conducting a series of meetings over the past few months, finishing up by the end of October. Last week DPD hosted an open house held at the community center in Chinatown/ID to begin soliciting comments from the public on the project. She noted that the purpose of this briefing to the Seattle Planning Commission is to let us know what staff has heard from the public at this hearing and what they are hearing from the advisory group.

She reported on the timeline and noted the following; the goal of the project is to balance regional service provision and related issues by supporting/encouraging more residential development in the area. The timeline is to complete the work with the advisory group in the next month and then have specific goals developed by the end of this year. Recommendations for land use code changes should be ready by mid-2006.

She reported that the advisory group is moving through a series of issues including urban design, open space, connections, and zoning. There are other issues being raised by the group – issues that need to be addressed for the community but some of which cannot be addressed by the land use code. We encourage those issues to be raised but need to be clear that they are outside of our scope, but that we will need to find a way for them to be addressed. Gary Johnson has established an interdepartmental team that will handle these issues. Our scope is limited to land use and zoning issues.

Chair Sheehy asked how the boundaries were determined.

Mr. Clowers indicated that on the north and east they were the existing boundaries of the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods (including Little Saigon). On the south the “natural” border of the I-90 in Chinatown/ID and then to the west included the stadium overlay district.

Commissioner Clements asked how industrial land is being evaluated in the area.

Mr. Clowers responded that the process has been qualitative. He’s been reviewing developable properties under current zoning. The study area includes only about one to one and a half percent of the Duwamish and contains only about enough room for 150 additional jobs. He has spoken with Mike Perring and Dave Gerring about the area. Early conclusions are that the area isn’t really attractive to being developed as industrial – costs are higher, properties are in limbo as owners are holding on waiting to see if there is going to be a zoning change, allowable heights are believed to be too low which is hampering redevelopment.

Commissioner Quintana asked whether they have spoke with representatives of labor.

Ms. McLain said that there are representatives on the advisory group. She wanted to add to the previous conversation that allowing housing in the currently zoned industrial areas is far from a

forgone conclusion. There are many issues to be dealt with before that can be concluded including encroachment issues and freight mobility. It will be important to work with other groups on these issues – and one of those will definitely be labor.

Mr. Clowers pointed out that the advisory group will be speaking more about these areas at their next meeting.

Commissioner Sheridan – the Planning Commission representative to the advisory group - said that she felt the advisory group looks at the micro level, not necessarily the big picture. For instance, there are three reps from the industrial area but that they don't say very much at the meetings. There is a lot of talk about change, but not compatibility. Freight mobility seems to be brought up peripherally. For example, nothing has been mentioned about the fact that in this area is the intersection of Interstates 90 and 5, two of the most important transportation routes in the nation. She feels that this is where the Planning Commission comes in – to look at this area in the larger context of the region – beyond everyone's specific property interests.

Commissioner Clements asked whether the group was looking at just exiting uses or are they looking into the future.

Commissioner Sheridan responded that she thought they would be open to looking at future changes.

Ms. McLain pointed out that they purposefully started with somewhat easier areas to discuss, like Little Saigon and the core of the International District. Now the group is moving into discussion of Pioneer Square and the Stadium District which could be more complex. She noted that this is a good time for the Planning Commission to get involved in the process.

Commissioner Sheridan said that she feels this is a prime area to be covered by an industrial lands strategy – maybe not the Goodwill site since that is somewhat of an established project and that it is somewhat detached from other industrial areas. But the issue isn't that this area could only support a small number of jobs or that it is a small area of Duwamish.

Commissioner Quintana furthered that point by saying that it is the fact of the encroachment that is the issue, not the numbers.

Commissioner Sheridan pointed out the INS building and its future is part of this discussion. It's up for grabs and the City seems to want to acquire housing.

Ms. McLain pointed out that Dearborn is a major freight corridor.

Chair Sheehy asked what else is happening in the area.

Mr. Clowers mentioned the North Lot and King County's plans are moving forward, the Johnson Building, over track development at King Street Station proposed by Nitze-Stagen.

Commissioner Blomberg asked what was being proposed for the Goodwill site.

Mr. Clowers indicated that development will include "medium" box retail, 400 units of housing, the Goodwill facilities will be replaced onsite, and 2000 parking spaces – all underground.

Commissioner Quintana asked Ms. McLain and Mr. Clowers what they were thinking about for the area in context of protecting industrial land but not wanting them to become blighted, underused properties. What could be done more creatively in the area?

Ms. McLain indicated that Seattle Mixed could be used here for light industry mixed with residential.

Commissioner Sheridan indicated that the Goodwill site wasn't really an issue for her, but the area south of Dearborn seems to have more issues – mix of uses, transportation, and width of streets.

Ms. McLain pointed out that another pressure in the area is property ownership.

Commissioner Blanco asked if they had developed a land tenure map.

Mr. Clowers indicated that they had done some research into that issue, but that they haven't been basing their work on ownership. In fact, they've been distancing themselves from ownership issues and trying to stick to a larger scope of issues.

Commissioner Sheehy thought that that might be a bit naïve – that ownership was a key element of whether things could or would be developed and that seems like necessary knowledge to guide their work.

Commissioner Clements asked what the criteria or the principles of what they are trying to achieve are.

Commissioner Sheridan agreed that the advisory group needed to talk about principles. So far the conversation has just really been about housing.

Ms. McLain pointed out that the principles were listed on the project information sheet.

Commissioner Sheridan said she thought the advisory group needed to be reminded of those.

Ms. McLain pointed out that the advisory group is just that... advisory. They have been an important part of the project, helping to identify issues, but in the end the staff will need to filter the discussion and add other issues that have been raised or that are pertinent to the overall project. She noted that all along, staff has been clear when we recap the meetings that we are reiterating what we have heard from the group, what we already know about the area, and what the direction/future of the area could be.

Commissioner To wondered if there was enough concern placed on preserving what is already there – it shouldn't all be about change. Is there a way to mitigate some of the encroachment in the area – instead of encouraging more change by allowing more encroachment, they should be looking at ways to buffer what has already gone in.

Commissioner Quintana made two points – 1) on the subject of encroachment, you might want to speak with people from Interbay who have been dealing with this issue for some time and 2) housing – has anyone noted that housing is being projected for everywhere? Is there enough demand to support this? Are you promoting too much housing?

Commissioner Fiori added that Tacoma and Portland have hardscape boundaries to define their districts. Perhaps we could consider allowing some change in some areas, but draw literal and figurative line over which no further encroachment would be allowed.

Vice-Chair Finrow raised concerns about some of the things he was hearing today. There seemed to be a focus on individual pockets of the area – rather than an overall approach. There also seemed to be a disconnect with other downtown areas and projects – a problem when doing neighborhood planning but one that seems particularly acute here. Also, when you have an advisory group made up of property owners you are not going to get a very broad approach to issues – they will be more interested in their properties. You might want to look at the height and density proposal for downtown and how it will impact this area. If you rule out change in the core areas, then you push all the change to the edges and that's where the encroachment becomes an issue. It seems like we need a new way of thinking in this area.

Ms. McLain said that that was the staff's intention and one of the reasons they have come to the Planning Commission today – to get the larger perspective and to be able to discuss the issues of the area in a citywide/regional context.

Commissioner Blanco said that the issue of property ownership needs to be looked at. In some places we will be creating windfalls and it will be important to know where and who will be benefiting and we need to harvest those benefits.

Commissioner To pointed out that the area qualifies for New Market Tax Credits – it is the only area downtown that does and that is a huge advantage for them.

Commissioner Quintana asked whether the stuff going on with the Center City Seattle strategy applied to this area. Ms. McLain said that it did.

Chair Sheehy noted that although there was more to discuss the meeting time ended and he knows many Commissioners need to leave. He thanked McLain and Mr. Clowers for their briefing and noted that the Commission will schedule a follow up meeting in the committee or at another full commission meeting in the future.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public present for the public comment period.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Sheehy adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.