



City of Olympia

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Meeting Minutes Planning Commission

Monday, April 15, 2013

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1.A ROLL CALL

There are currently five seated members of the Planning Commission.

Present: 5 - Chair Jerome Parker, Vice Chair Judy Bardin, Commissioner Paul Ingman, Commissioner Agnieszka Kiswa, and Commissioner Roger Horn

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Parker proposed adding an item called "Urban Neighborhoods" following the briefing on the Olympia Regional Learning Academy proposal. He also proposed adding a short briefing under "Information Requests" regarding the Council's Community Renewal Area project, response to an article from Atlantic Magazine regarding sprawl, and a status update regarding the Department of Fish & Wildlife building downtown.

Chair Parker moved, seconded by Commissioner Ingman, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

5. INFORMATION REQUESTS

Community Planning & Development Director Keith Stahley provided a briefing regarding density in Olympia. Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) projects that approximately 84 percent of countywide growth will occur in the urban area over the next 20 years. However, the projections for Olympia, which are based on zoning and existing trends, predict a low percentage of growth in our high density corridors and downtown. Most of Olympia's growth is projected to occur in the southeast.

Mr. Stahley discussed the areas of the City considered walkable versus car dependant, as determined by the organization Walk Score. Mr. Stahley then responded to questions posed by Commissioners.

Mr. Stahley provided a briefing about the City Council's Community Renewal Area (CRA) project. The Council approved a contract with consulting firm Eco-Northwest to prepare a CRA plan for Olympia. Mr. Stahley described tasks involved in that work and how it relates to other projects. It has not been determined how the CRA will relate to the Downtown Master Plan process.

This summer, the State of Washington, in partnership with the City, will issue a Request for Qualifications/ Request for Proposals (RFQ/RFP) for redevelopment of the former Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) building in downtown. DFW currently owns the property, and plans to sell it once they identify a developer to purchase and redevelop it according to the criteria established in the RFP. Mr. Stahley responded to questions posed by Commissioners.

The CRA contract and related information are available online under the April 9, 2013 City Council agenda.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

[13-0313](#)

Approval of Ordinance Amending OMC Chapter 18 Related to Large Commercial Buildings in Residential Neighborhoods

Current Planning Manager Steve Friddle briefed the Commission regarding a proposed code amendment related to the Olympia School District's proposed development of a new school, the Olympia Regional Learning Academy (ORLA). ORLA is to be located in an unincorporated island on Boulevard Road. This area is currently in process to be annexed. Also, the District has submitted a Land Use/Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the proposed school. However, neither the annexation nor the CUP are the specific issues before the Planning Commission. The issue before the Commission is a potential zoning code amendment regarding parking and design standards.

During preliminary CUP review of the ORLA project, staff identified zoning compliance issues pertaining to parking and design guidelines that require buildings to front the street and parking lots to be placed at the rear or side of buildings. The issue is outlined in the staff report. The District discussed this matter with the City Council, and the Council agreed to refer exploration of a potential code amendment to the Planning Commission for an expedited public hearing and recommendation.

TCF Architecture Architect Brian Fitzgerald (the firm hired by the District to design ORLA) provided a briefing about the project. The school is scheduled to open in Fall of 2014. He is working with the District's ORLA planning team, made up of administrators, teachers and parents. They have held public meetings in the neighborhood to discuss the project, design, traffic, etc. A majority of students are expected to arrive to this regional school by car. The District's preferred site design is an attempt to balance safety, traffic and other needs identified by the District planning team and neighborhoods. There is concern that bringing the building up to the street edge will overwhelm neighbors across the street, negatively impede ingress and egress, force parking to the back, force two entries to the building (a

safety concern), and limit future expansion opportunities.

Commissioners expressed concern about: the project design; huge parking lots along the street; scale of the building; safety and health of children who will have to cross a parking lot to get to the doors; disregard for Comprehensive Plan goals to create a more walkable community; and why this zoning code proposal was presented to the City at this stage when the District is so far along with site design. Mr. Fitzgerald responded to the Commission's comments and questions.

Following tonight's briefing, the Commission will hold a public hearing on a staff proposed code amendment to change parking/design standards. At this time, staff is unsure whether they will propose an amendment that applies strictly to schools, or more broadly to other uses in residential zones that typically have large building footprints and parking lots.

Chair Parker confirmed the Commission will hold a public hearing on a proposed code amendment at a future meeting. Staff will provide a specific proposal at that time.

Urban Neighborhoods Proposal

Commissioner Ingman handed out a proposal prepared by him and Commissioner Horn. The handout outlines proposed revisions to the Urban Neighborhood goals, policies, and map that were recommended by the Planning Commission last March as part of their overall recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Commissioner Ingman clarified the definition on page 2 of the handout would replace the definition of Low-Density Neighborhoods in the draft Plan. Tonight's proposal also adds new definitions for medium- and high-density housing, and medium-density neighborhood centers.

Planning Manager Todd Stamm confirmed the Future Land Use map in the Comprehensive Plan informs zoning, but updating the zoning map is a separate process. Mr. Stamm clarified that since 1994, the City has loosely defined cottage housing as developments having reduced lot sizes with open space and common areas. The Commission suggested several edits to the proposal.

Commissioner Horn suggested further edits to the Urban Neighborhoods proposal.

The Commission agreed to advance everything adopted tonight in an attachment to the cover (transmittal) letter to the City Council, along with a note stating further discussion occurred in April, and the rationale for the supplementary recommendation. Commissioner Ingman will incorporate all of the corrections made tonight into the document and send those and the map to Planner Amy Buckler to include as an attachment to the May 20 transmittal cover letter.

Commissioner Horn moved, seconded by Vice Chair Bardin, to approve Commissioner Ingman's recommendation with the changes made today, and attach these changes to the cover letter going to the City Council. The motion

carried by unanimous vote.

[13-0310](#) 2013 Planning Commission Work Program

Chair Parker asked the Commissioners to send Ms. Buckler their suggestions for the 2013 work plan, in anticipation of the May 6 meeting.

The recommendation was discussed and continued to the May 6 meeting.

[13-0311](#) Transmittal Letters to City Council (regarding the
Comprehensive Plan Update)

The Commission paused discussion of Urban Neighborhoods to discuss their transmittal cover letter, which will be forwarded to Council on May 20. Chair Parker will finesse the language of the transmittal cover letter to explain the rationale and process for development of the supplemental Urban Neighborhoods proposal.

The cover letter will also explain that some of the Commissioners were under the assumption that the Commission only voted to forward the specific recommendations made by final vote on March 18, while other Commissioners and staff assumed the July Draft would be edited to reflect those recommendations and an "OPC recommended draft" would be forwarded to Council. Chair Parker will call each of the prior members to gauge their opinion, and maybe tally the vote in the cover letter. Commissioners may also write individual letters.

[13-0312](#) 2013 Annual Planning Commission Retreat

The work session was postponed to a future meeting.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[13-0316](#) Approval of April 1, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Chair Parker noted concern that some details in the minutes may not be clear. He agreed to meet with Associate Planner Stacey Ray to go over the April 1 meeting minutes to clarify details.

The minutes were tabled to May 6.

8. REPORTS - None

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 p.m.