



City of Olympia

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Meeting Minutes Planning Commission

Monday, June 3, 2013

6:30 PM

Room 207

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order.

1.A ROLL CALL

Present: 8 - Chair Jerome Parker, Vice Chair Judy Bardin, Commissioner Kim Andresen, Commissioner Jessica Bateman, Commissioner Max Brown, Commissioner Roger Horn, Commissioner Carole Richmond, and Commissioner Missy Watts

Absent: 1 - Commissioner Darrell Hoppe

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

3. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

New Planning Commissioner Carole Richmond introduced herself. She said she is very interested in local planning issues, particularly in regards to conservation of green space and sustainable development.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Chris van Daalen from Northwest Eco-Builders Guild invited Commissioners to attend a Vision to Action Symposium regarding carbon neutral building to be held June 7 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at St. Martins. Chair Parker said he will be participating in a panel at the event.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Parker announced: 1) staff sent an email with links to planning resources, and he encouraged Commissioners to make use of it; 2) he expressed appreciation for the visuals included with the agenda item regarding the Commission's retreat; and 3) Carl See, a member of the public, sent a comment letter to the Commission today regarding his concerns about the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Associate Planner Amy Buckler provided instruction about how to use the new microphones. She also gave an overview of the City Council's timeline for review of the Comprehensive

Plan Update, which is planned to kick off in September 2013.

Chair Parker described the format for the June 11 joint meeting with City Council. The first half of the meeting will be a discussion of the Commission's recommended draft of the Comprehensive Plan Update and will include prior Commission members. The second half will be facilitated by Consultant Kendra Dahlen with the current membership and will focus on upcoming work of the Commission.

INFORMATION REQUESTS

There were no information requests.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

6.A [13-0313](#) Approval of Ordinance Amending OMC Chapter 18 Related to Large Commercial Buildings in Residential Neighborhoods

Chair Parker reminded Commissioners the issue before them is in regard to a code change, not the design of a specific project. Before opening deliberation, Chair Parker asked Commissioners to indicate if there was a consensus to not change this code; Vice Chair Bardin indicated she might be for that.

Planning Manager Steve Friddle described the matter before the Commission. The current baseline is that large commercial buildings are required to provide parking at the rear of the lot. The proposed change would allow an alternative parking location for buildings over 5,000 square feet, requiring a conditional use permit, located in select residential districts, and having multiple street frontages, so long as the project complies with added criteria to protect the surrounding neighborhood from negative impacts. Most uses of this size will be churches and schools. Bill-format changes to the parking and design codes are included in the agenda packet.

Commission Discussion:

- Conditional use permits for projects of this size are required to go to the Hearing Examiner for approval.
- Projects with only one street frontage would still be required to locate parking at the rear or side.
- Other sections of the code require site-obscuring screening between incompatible uses.
- Typical reasons why parking in the rear might not be the best fit for the site include topographic challenges or critical areas.
- The variance process in the code has very specific criteria that could not be applied to the school district project which was the impetus for this proposed code change. To fix the issue for that project and future projects that are similar requires a citywide code change.
- Most of the school sites in Olympia do not comply with current parking requirements.
- The zoning code is more prescriptive than the design review code, which is purposely vague to allow for more flexibility.
- If this code change doesn't pass, the applicant will have to make the case to the Hearing Examiner that the project complies with current code, or redesign the project. If the

- Examiner denies the project, it can be appealed to Thurston County Superior Court.
- The School District held several neighborhood meetings in regard to their project. Staff does not know why the School District informed the City of their design issues so late in the design process.
 - The Planning Commission is being asked to consider this code change because it is required to review proposed changes to the development code.
 - Weather protection requirements for pedestrians and bicyclists apply to the right of way. When talking about this type of facility on-site, the Hearing Examiner could require it as a condition, but the requirement in the code is intended for right of way areas.
 - The design district that applies to the school site is "commercial - residential scale district." The infill design regulations apply to accessory dwelling units, single families residents and townhouses.
 - It doesn't seem like there is a high enough threshold for applicants to demonstrate they can't comply with the current regulation, so it could be over-used.
 - A reasonable use exception is a technical term. This process and criteria can be used when codes deny any use of a property, such as when the site is entirely within a critical area. Reasonable use exceptions are different than a standard variance.
 - Suggestion that staff might remove "shall(s)" so that the terminology is consistent throughout.
 - There are other codes that would apply to projects besides the code before the Commission.
 - There was a discussion about whether to require a bike path through the site, but the majority was opposed.

Commissioners provided the following as reasons for their votes:

- Commissioner Horn: There are few large churches and schools over 5,000 sq. ft., so this won't apply to a majority of such uses. Other goals in the Comprehensive Plan are being met (energy efficiency, safety, connection to grand entrance) with the school project as an example, and the Hearing Examiner has proven to try to meet the Comprehensive Plan. He understands Vice Chair Bardin's reasons, but personally sees no reason to object.
- Vice Chair Bardin: She liked certain things about the school plan (solar, green space) but has a concern about how other projects would be affected. Seeing parking in front of a facility is not welcoming. Instead of putting exceptions in the code, leave it to the community to weigh in.
- Commissioner Bateman: As a general rule, parking in the rear is more aesthetically pleasing, but the original code wasn't meant to apply to schools. The safety issue for students was compelling.
- Commissioner Andresen: She sees the school project as innovative, and it's in our future to consider a lot of the elements the project has. However, are we creating the proper avenue of checks and balances? She will trust the process. The code itself provides some flexibility. She is a little annoyed that the school district came in so late with the needed code change, but besides that, she is okay with it.
- Commissioner Brown: He appreciates Vice Chair Bardin's comments, and is also frustrated with the school district's timing. He appreciates the community involvement and support. We are allowing for flexibility. The project takes care of a blighted area.
- Chair Parker: His comments go back to the project; he appreciated that the architect made changes to reflect public comment. Perfect may be the enemy of the good. In the

long-run, huge parking lots are concerning, but there is no alternative in this place.

There was consensus to allow Mr. Friddle to include the recommendation in his staff report, rather than the Commission writing a formal letter.

Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Bateman, to recommend to City Council the staff proposal (Option 2) with the language amendments suggested by Commissioners (removal of "yards;" the term "shall").

Aye: 6 - Chair Parker, Commissioner Andresen, Commissioner Bateman, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Horn and Commissioner Watts

Nay: 1 - Vice Chair Bardin

Abstained: 1 - Commissioner Richmond

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

Ms. Buckler reviewed the Commission's draft work plan. This is a realistic number of items given the number of meetings between July 2013 and March 2014.

The Commission provided feedback. In relation to a briefing on the topic proposed for December, they requested to hear more about what other cities are doing to increase and enhance urban green space. The briefing about accessory dwelling units proposed for October should be expanded to cover other types of small dwelling units. Working on the downtown master plan is one of the Commission's highest priorities. This could include discussion of retrofitting existing parking lots for urban infill. Overall, the Commission is happy with the proposed work plan.

The recommendation was discussed and forwarded to the General Government Committee due back on 6/25/2013.

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

Ms. Buckler provided an overview of options for the Commission's annual retreat, and the Commission provided feedback.

Several Commissioners originally wanted to tour other cities to view vibrant downtowns or urban corridors; however, they are now leaning toward taking a tour of Olympia's neighborhood centers. It's possible to do both, but not as part of this retreat event.

The Commission came to a consensus, deciding to take a the tour of neighborhood centers in Olympia. It would be fun to visit other communities, but staying local to gain perspective is important right now. Getting to know each other is also an important aspect of the retreat.

The Commission discussed whether or not to invite neighborhood association and private development representatives to join the tour and after-discussion. Planning Manager Todd Stamm cautioned not to turn the retreat into a public forum, as that would require a different level of support from staff that was not anticipated for this work item. The

Commission decided to return to City Hall after the tour for a brief discussion amongst themselves and any members of the public who may attend. They might consider a follow-up discussion at a later date to involve neighborhoods, businesses, developers and other community stakeholders.

Some questions to consider during the retreat include:

- What would it take to make neighborhood centers a viable option for neighbors and developers?
- How do you redevelop existing developed properties that are underutilized or vacant?

Commissioners will send Ms. Buckler any additional thoughts. She will return with a draft itinerary and lunch options at the next meeting.

The work session was discussed and forwarded to the Planning Commission due back on 6/17/2013.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to approve.

8. REPORTS

Chair Parker already covered the Leadership Team meeting during announcements.

Finance Subcommittee Chair Roger Horn announced the first meeting of the Subcommittee will be June 19, in Room 112 at 6:30 p.m. Commissioners may attend without making a commitment to join. Working on the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) recommendation is a good education. The Subcommittee's work load for the year is pretty ambitious, as the Mayor requested they also draft another letter regarding the City's long-term investment strategy.

Chair Parker announced the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Community Renewal Area will have its first meeting on Thursday, June 6 in the Council Chambers.

Commissioner Horn attended the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting on May 22. The major topic was neighborhood pathways.

Chair Parker tried to attend a pathway dedication in the northeast neighborhood, but he couldn't find it. He did find Mission Creek Park, though, and found it wonderful.

The Commission agreed to cancel their regularly scheduled meeting on July 1st.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 p.m.