

Members

Jeremy C. Doty, Chair
Donald Erickson, Vice-Chair
Chris Beale
Sean Gaffney
Tina Lee
Ian Morrison
Matthew Nutsch
Erle Thompson
Scott Winship



Minutes

Tacoma Planning Commission

Community and Economic Development Department

Ryan Petty, Director
Peter Huffman, Assistant Director
Charles Solverson, P.E., Building Official

Public Works and Utilities Representatives

Kurtis Kingsolver, Interim Assistant Director/City Engineer, Public Works Department
Heather Pennington, Water Distribution Engineering Manager, Tacoma Water
Diane Lachel, Community and Government Relations Manager, Click! Network, Tacoma Power

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(Approved on 2-1-12)

MEETING: Regular Meeting

TIME: Wednesday, December 21, 2011, 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Members Present: Jeremy Doty (Chair; arrived at 4:40 p.m.), Donald Erickson (Vice-Chair),
Chris Beale, Tina Lee, Matthew Nutsch, Erle Thompson

Members Excused: Sean Gaffney, Ian Morrison, Scot Winship

Staff Present: Stephen Atkinson, Brian Boudet, Karla Kluge, Ian Munce, Jana Magoon,
Lihuang Wung (CED); Josh Diekmann (Public Works)

Vice-Chair Erickson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Critical Areas Preservation Code Update

Karla Kluge, Building and Land Use, provided a status report on the update of the Critical Areas Preservation Code. She explained that the proposed revisions were needed to clarify the existing code language, streamline the process for code application, and provide new sections addressing four major issues concerning voluntary restoration, small development projects, wetland buffer refinement and additional mitigation options. She also mentioned how staff solicited comments and feedback through benchmarking analysis, meetings with the Focus Group, and meetings with staff from other City departments and other jurisdictions.

Ms. Kluge reviewed the public comments received during and following the Planning Commission's public hearing on September 21, 2011; staff responses to the comments; as well as the modifications to the Critical Areas Preservation Code that staff has instigated in response to the public comment. She also responded to Commissioners' questions and suggestions relating to such issues as buffer reduction, programmatic permits, and whether the footnote of



Table 8 Wetlands of Local Significance pertaining to “recommendation from Critical Areas Task Force June 2004” was still applicable.

In conclusion, Ms. Kluge indicated that staff will take into account the feedback from the Commission and prepare a recommendation package that includes a letter of recommendation, the Commission’s findings and recommendations report, the proposed code amendment, and appropriate background information. The package will be presented at a future meeting for the Commission’s approval and subsequently forwarded to the City Council for consideration.

2. Master Program for Shoreline Development

Stephen Atkinson, Long Range Planning, reported that the Shoreline Master Program Update was approved by the City Council on November 29, 2011, and that Tacoma is one of the only larger cities that have developed a Council approved Shoreline Master Program. He commended the Planning Commission for all the hard work that went into accomplishing this task. He also provided the Commission with a summary of the public testimony received by the Council and the modifications and changes in language that were made by the Council as a result of the public testimony; he also responded to questions from Commissioners regarding changes that were made to the specific amendments in the Code.

In terms of the next steps, Mr. Atkinson highlighted some additional tasks and updates that will be undertaken in 2012, including development of recommendations for a public access fee in lieu program; development of a preferred public access alternative with preliminary design and engineering for the shoreline along Schuster Parkway; a review of the Shoreline Trails Plan, Ruston Way Plan and Thea Foss Plan; as well as the Port of Tacoma’s initiative to develop a Port Public Access Plan that would apply to Port projects and tenants. Mr. Atkinson stated that staff will continue to keep the Commission updated of the progress of these projects.

(Chair Doty arrived and presided over the meeting from this point forward.)

3. 2012 Annual Amendment #2012-2 Housing Element

Ian Munce, Long Range Planning, provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the Housing Element, which included three components, i.e., (a) incorporating the eight policy principles concerning Affordable Housing, as directed by the City Council per Resolution No. 38264, adopted on May 17, 2011; (b) ensuring consistency with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County pursuant to the Growth Management Act; and (c) updating housing needs and assessment information based on the 2010 census data.

Mr. Munce further explained the three components, focusing on the eight policy principles that were part of the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group to the City Council. He indicated that staff’s approach to incorporating the eight principles would be to replace the intent statement of "Housing Affordability" section in the Housing Element with a new intent statement that speaks to the nature and intent of the eight policy principles.

Discussion ensued. The Commission requested for additional information regarding the definition of “affordable housing.” Mr. Munce indicated that staff will return at a later meeting with the actual changes to the Housing Element for the Commission’s consideration for approval. The Commission concurred.

4. Large Scale Retail Moratorium

Brian Boudet, Long Range Planning, reviewed the public comments received during and following the Planning Commission public hearing on September 7, 2011, concerning the proposed amendments to the zoning code provisions relative to large scale retail uses. He facilitated the Commission's discussion of potential alternatives in response to issues brought up in the public testimony, including the applicability of the conditional use permit requirement to the reuse of existing buildings.

The Commissioners discussed the appropriate threshold for the level of alteration of an existing building that should trigger the conditional use permit review. This included how the threshold relates to projects that may represent an expansion of a retail use or space within an existing building but not involve any actual additions to the building, which was an issue raised at the hearing. After a lively debate, the consensus was to recommend an expansion threshold of 50% of the existing size of the use, along with the threshold of 10% for actual building additions. In this manner, uses could expand within an existing building unless that expansion exceeded one of those thresholds.

The Commission also suggested that the expanded notification distance of 1,000 feet should apply both to the pre-application community meeting and the public hearing, that a reduced amount of parking be included as a suggested method for improving the design of parking areas, and that low-impact development techniques be included as an example of how to better ensure consistency with the desired community character and reduce impacts. The Commission concurred with the other minor changes recommended by staff in response to the public comment.

Mr. Boudet indicated that staff will incorporate the Commissioners' suggestions into the draft Findings and Recommendations Report for the Commission's consideration for approval at the next meeting.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

None.

COMMENTS BY LONG-RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

Mr. Lihuang Wung reported that the Planning Commission has completed the year of 2011 without missing any of the 24 scheduled meetings. The Commissioners have been working diligently on such important projects as the 2011 Annual Amendment, the Historic Preservation Plan, the 2012 Annual Amendment, the Shoreline Master Program Update, the Billboard Regulations, the Billboard Moratorium, the Medical Cannabis Moratorium, the Large Scale Retail Moratorium, the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance Update, and the Downtown Parking Requirements. Mr. Wung expressed staff's appreciation to the Commissioners for their invaluable input, feedback and advice throughout the year.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioner Lee invited all in attendance to a retirement party for Pierce Transit's Marketing Manager and former Commissioner Scott Morris scheduled for December 30, 2011 at Pierce Transit's Training Center.

Chair Doty commended City staff for all the hard work, knowledge and professionalism that they displayed throughout the year that was a great aid in helping the Planning Commission complete the projects that were given to them.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.