

Members

Jeremy C. Doty, Chair
 Thomas C. O'Connor, Vice-Chair
 Chris Beale
 Peter Elswick
 Donald Erickson
 Sean Gaffney
 Scott Morris
 Ian Morrison
 Matthew Nutsch



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

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

747 Market Street, Room 1036
 Tacoma, WA 98402-3793
 253-591-5365 (phone) / 253-591-2002 (fax)
www.cityoftacoma.org/planning

(Approved as Amended on 6-15-11)

MEETING: Regular Meeting

TIME: Wednesday, May 18, 2011 4:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Jeremy Doty (Chair), Chris Beale, Peter Elswick, Donald Erickson, Sean Gaffney, Scott Morris, Ian Morrison, Matthew Nutsch

Members Absent: Thomas O'Connor

Staff Present: Donna Stenger, Brian Boudet, Shirley Schultz, Cheri Gibbons, Chelsea Levy, Jana Magoon, Noah Yacker (Building and Land Use Services); Josh Diekmann (Public Works); Shelley Kerlake (legal counsel)

Chair Doty called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. The minutes for the meetings of April 6, 2011 (as amended per Commissioners' suggestion at the May 4th meeting), April 20, 2011, and May 4, 2011 were approved as submitted.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Chair Doty suspended the rules to consider the second discussion item first.

1. Downtown Parking Requirements

Ms. Chelsea Levy stated that the Economic Development and Environment and Public Works Committees of the City Council have **instructed requested** the Planning Commission to assess parking-related barriers to new development. This direction supports a policy goal of the Downtown Element of Comprehensive Plan to move toward a market-based approach to parking in downtown. Ms. Levy outlined a proposal to eliminate the minimum and maximum off-street parking requirements for new development in the area of downtown zoned DCC – Downtown Commercial Core and within the designated Historic and Conservation overlay districts (generally between 6th Ave. and S. 23rd St.). This proposal builds on the 2009 International Financial Services Area (IFSA) parking amendment (Ordinance No. 27825) which eliminated parking requirements in the designated IFSA.



The Commissioners discussed opportunities to balance the Council's interest to establish a market-based approach to parking with a desire to minimize negative externalities that too much parking may create in urban environments, like pollution, a disconnected unwalkable urban form, high proportion of single occupancy vehicle use, etc. Some Commissioners expressed interest in retaining the maximums in an effort to address the City's environmental, urban design and multimodal goals. Commissioners discussed some potential circumstances under which allowing a developer to build parking above the maximum (if the maximums are retained) may be appropriate. The Commission also expressed interest in making permanent the expiring provision that allows for flexibility in locating required accessible parking. The Commission requested that Ms. Levy include in her next presentation benchmarking information on downtown parking regulations in peer cities and preliminary feedback from the community on this proposal. The Commission also requested for the Commission's review before the next meeting on June 15, 2011, the 2007 Parking and Mobility Strategy and the 2008 Downtown Economic Development Strategy prepared for the City by Angelou Economics.

2. Billboard Regulations

Ms. Shelley Kerslake, the City's legal counsel, explained to the Commissioners the expectations from the City Council in light of the passage of the City's Moratorium on applications for new billboards. The Commissioners are tasked with developing findings on the need for and the duration of the moratorium and to provide a recommendation by June 1. The Municipal Code requires that the Commission conduct a public hearing before making this recommendation. Commissioner Erickson attended the Council meeting on May 17, 2011 when the moratorium was enacted and stated he thought it was clear that the Council expected the Commission to spend additional time to re-visit the billboard regulations. Ms. Kerslake responded that the Council was interested in using the six-month Moratorium to study the issues further and it would be up to the Council if further review by the Commission is needed. Ms. Donna Stenger commented that some revisions to the billboard code were recommended for approval by the Commission as part of the recommendation to the Council to ban digital billboards. The parts of the code that the Commissioners felt still needed additional work were not recommended, but some of those changes were possible options that the Council may consider. After discussion, the Commission set a public hearing date of June 1, 2011 to consider the need for and the duration of the moratorium.

The Commission discussed whether to amend the findings and recommendations on the proposed code changes to ban digital billboards because of the passage of the moratorium. The Commission asked that the letter of recommendation be revised to insert the phrase "at this time" where the letter states that digital billboards be banned. The Commissioners felt that if the Council directed further study on digital billboards and emerging technology, it may be possible to develop code revisions if given additional time to allow such boards in limited instances. Ms. Shirley Schultz reviewed the code revisions proposed for adoption including changing definitions, explicitly stating that digital billboards are prohibited in all zoning districts, adding landscaping standards, and revising the non-conforming provisions consistent with how the code addresses other non-conforming structures. Commissioner Morrison asked that the language describing schools as one of the buffered uses be reworded for clarity. After further discussion, the Commission unanimously approved the letter of recommendation to the City Council as modified, the findings and recommendations report and the billboard code revisions and further recommended all pertinent documentation be forwarded to the City Council.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Chair Doty acknowledged receipt of the following announcements:

1. "A Regional Short Course on Local Planning", June 13, 2011, Department of Commerce
2. City Council Public Hearing on May 24, 2011, concerning the Planning Commission's recommendations on the Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code for 2011.
3. The City Council is seeking citizens to fill three positions on the Planning Commission, representing Council District No. 1 (West End and North End), Development Community, and Public Transportation, for a 3-year term from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2014. Applications must be submitted to the Mayor's Office by Friday, June 10, 2011.
4. The Planning Commission is accepting applications for amending the Comprehensive Plan and/or Land Use Regulatory Code for 2012. Applications must be submitted by Thursday, June 30, 2011.

COMMENTS BY LONG-RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

Ms. Stenger reported that the City Council at the first reading of the ordinance to adopt the Wedge Neighborhood Historic District on May 17, 2011, introduced a substitute Ordinance that modifies the boundary lines of the Historic District and Conservation District that were recommended by the Planning Commission. The changes increase the size of the Conservation District and create a smaller historic district. Councilman David Boe gave a brief explanation of how the revised boundaries were developed. He noted that he personally supported the Commission's recommendation but lacked support from the majority of Council members. He indicated it was his intent to preserve the majority of what the neighborhood had requested several years ago. The Council and other stakeholders support the proposed boundary revisions.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioners commended the staff for all the hard work that was done on the letter to the City Council regarding their thoughts, recommendations and opinions on the Billboard Code Revisions.

Commissioner Beale disclosed that he had talked with Jill Jensen regarding billboards. Commissioner Gaffney asked to be excused from July meetings. Commissioner Morris asked to be excused from the June 15th meeting. Commissioner Erickson disclosed that he had met with Doug Schafer regarding billboards, and that he had toured the Old City Hall with Historic Tacoma.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.