

Members

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

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



Minutes

Tacoma Planning Commission

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

(Approved on 7-6-11)

MEETING: Regular Meeting

TIME: Wednesday, June 15, 2011, 4:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Thomas O'Connor (Vice-Chair), Donald Erickson (Vice-Chair-Elect), Chris Beale, Peter Elswick, Sean Gaffney (excused at 5:00 p.m.), Matthew Nutsch

Members Absent: Jeremy Doty (Chair), Scott Morris, Ian Morrison

Staff Present: Donna Stenger, Jana Magoon, Steve Atkinson, Brian Boudet, Chelsea Levy, Shanta Frantz, Karla Kluge, Lihuang Wung, Noah Yacker (Building and Land Use Services); Josh Diekmann (Public Works)

Vice-Chair O'Connor called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. The minutes for the meeting of May 18, 2011 were reviewed. Commissioner Erickson suggested a change to the first sentence of "Downtown Parking Requirements", as shown below:

"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."

The proposed amendment was accepted and the minutes were approved as amended.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers for 2011-2012

Chair Doty and Commissioner Erickson were elected as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. Vice-Chair Erickson proceeded to preside over the remainder of the meeting.



2. Master Program for Shoreline Development

Mr. Stephen Atkinson provided an overview of the public testimony on the Shoreline Master Program Update received at the Planning Commission public hearing on June 1, 2011 and through the comment period ending on June 10, 2011. He distributed the written record and summary of oral testimony which had been bound together in a book for ease of use during review. The comments have also been posted online.

Most of the comments were regarding the S-7 and S-6 district boundaries, public access requirements, critical area buffer standards, zoning issues for the eastside of the Foss Waterway, including prohibitions of the expansion of existing industries. There also were comments regarding exemptions and non-conforming uses, environmental designations, as well as clarifications and cleanup items. Mr. Atkinson also highlighted the Department of Ecology's comments concerning marine buffer reductions, clarification of shoreline zoning and shoreline jurisdiction boundaries, and non-conforming use standards related to in-water structures.

The Commissioners requested that staff provide additional information in response to some of the comments. This included the cost of rehabilitation and oversight authority for Bayside Trails, the need for more visual aids for lay persons to better understand the public access requirements, further clarification on public access and legal constraints and the regulation of the ships at the Sperry Ocean Dock, and the trains along Schuster Parkway. The Commissioners also requested additional background information on the current prohibition of expansion of existing industry along the eastside of the Foss Waterway.

3. Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance (CAPO) Update

Ms. Karla Kluge reported on the status of the CAPO revisions and the last Focus Group meeting. City staff met with the Focus Group on Voluntary Restoration and Enhancement projects and proposed approaches designed to review, approve, and permit voluntary restoration and enhancement projects within the City on public and private land. The proposed approach is designed with three tiers that relate to project impact rather than project activity. The first tier, "Approved Activities", allows projects that will have no impact to occur without review and approval by the City as long as you meet the code parameters. The second tier, "Activities Approved with Staff Review", allows projects to occur with staff review and approval. Staff approval may include a written letter with conditional requirements. This approach is also based on impacts that are either minor or temporary and do not require compensatory mitigation. The second tier also breaks voluntary restoration into small individual projects and large-scale community projects. The third tier, "Programmatic Permits", requires written approval by the Land Use Administrator and contains compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts.

City staff have completed review of all topics with the Focus Group under the limited scope of topics approved by the Planning Commission. The Focus Group was generally in agreement with the proposed language and approach for voluntary restoration. During the meeting, two issues were discussed that remained under consideration. The first involved the 15% slope to 25% for removal of invasive species under the Approved Activities approach. The second issue related to the re-development and moving toward compliance vs. requiring full compliance with the new code. The example used was moving a trail away from the water's edge, but not being able to place it in the outer 25% of the buffer.

The Planning Commission did not support raising the 15% slope threshold as this relates to geotechnical erosion hazards and work completed is without any review. Ms. Kluge explained that through an innovative mitigation approach, moving the trail away from the water's edge is a preferred environmental alternative and an applicant can provide that justification under the current code and would be able to use a similar approach in the revised code. However, there is no guarantee without full review. Additional comments included definitions for "mechanical" and "pervious areas", setting programmatic permits to 5 years with easy renewal following review instead of outright 10-year approvals, locating wetland buffers with the help of City staff, mitigating hazard trees in ways other than removal, and new floodplain requirements.

4. Downtown Parking Requirements

In response to the Planning Commission's request made on May 18, 2011, Ms. Chelsea Levy provided additional information regarding the proposal to eliminate the minimum and maximum parking regulations for new development in the Downtown Commercial Core zone and the Historic and Conservation overlay districts.

Following a review of the proposal and the existing off-street parking regulations for downtown, Ms. Levy reported on the research compiled by herself and project team members from Building and Land Use Services, Noah Yacker and Shanta Frantz. The review of the research included explanations of how Tacoma's parking regulations compare to eleven northwest cities; how Tacoma's existing parking regulations have been applied in seven relatively recent residential and non-residential projects in downtown; and preliminary public feedback on the proposal. All project-related materials and background documents have been posted on the Planning Division's website at www.cityoftacoma.org/Planning, linked to "Downtown Code Update - Off-Street Parking Requirements", Ms. Levy stated.

In their discussion the Commissioners debated the implications of eliminating the parking minimums and maximums. Commissioners were divided on whether the maximums should be eliminated. Some Commissioners advocated that the market will determine the right amount of parking based on demand. Given the high cost of parking, developers will not over build parking unless there is a demand for more parking by the public. Alternatively, other Commissioners commented that downtown is a designated Regional Growth Center with adopted policies to take on additional growth while implementing strategies that reduce dependency on single occupancy vehicles. The Commission requested a further policy analysis to help guide the direction of their deliberations. Some Commissioners also expressed support for a request from the University of Washington Tacoma to expand the proposed boundary to include the entire campus footprint. Currently, the boundary bisects the campus.

Commissioners decided to continue their discussion of parking maximums and the boundary adjustment in July when the full Commission will be available to weigh in on the issues.

5. 2010-2011 Accomplishments and 2011-2012 Planning Activities

Ms. Donna Stenger reported that during July 2010 to June 2011, the Planning Commission has conducted twenty-three regular meetings and five public hearings and participated in a number of community meetings and functions. The Commission has made recommendations to the City Council on such major projects as the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment, billboard moratorium and code revisions relating to billboards, and the Wedge Neighborhood Historic

Special Review Overlay District and Conservation District. The Commission is also in the process of completing several major projects regarding the Shoreline Master Program Update, the Container Port Element, the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance Update, and the Downtown Parking Requirements.

Ms. Stenger noted that the City's Mixed-Use Centers Update Project received the 2010 Governor's Smart Communities Awards, that the Complete Streets Design Guidelines received the 2010 American Planning Association and Planning Association of Washington Joint Awards, and that the Complete Streets Design Guidelines was recently ranked by the National Complete Streets Coalition as one of the top 15 in the nation among more than 200 state and local comparable policies. Both projects were completed under the direction of the Planning Commission, Ms. Stenger stated.

Ms. Stenger also briefly reviewed the scope of work for some of the projects the Commission would be involved in for the coming year. Those projects were grouped in the following categories:

- Mandated projects – Shoreline Master Program, Billboard Regulations, and 2012 Annual Amendment (including Urban Forestry, Affordable Housing Principles, on-premise digital signs, etc.).
- Grant obligations – Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), South Downtown/Brewery District Sub-Area Plan, and MLK District Sub-Area Plan & SEPA Planned Action.
- Projects committed and underway – Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance, Historic Preservation Code amendments, and Downtown Parking Requirements.
- Planned for initiation – Shoreline Public Access and Restoration Planning, and Parking Requirements for Commercial District Citywide.
- Projects under consideration – Affordable Housing Strategies, Implementation of Sustainable Tacoma Commission Priorities, and Old Town Historic District.

Ms. Stenger concluded by stating that the 2010-2011 Accomplishments and 2011-2012 Planning Activities report when finalized will be submitted to the City Council to fulfill the annual reporting requirement of the Planning Commission.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Vice-Chair Erickson acknowledged receipt of the following announcements:

1. Joint Study Session of City Council and Planning Commission regarding Billboards, June 14, 2011.
2. The Planning Commission is accepting applications for amending the Comprehensive Plan and/or Land Use Regulatory Code for 2012. Applications must be submitted by June 30, 2011.

COMMENTS BY LONG-RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

Ms. Stenger reported that the City Council adopted the 2011 Annual Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code last night (June 14th). The Council

made a modification to what the Planning Commission had recommended for adoption, which was to clarify the applicability of design review within Conservation Districts. It is worth noting that there was only a small change during the Council's review process, as this was a very large undertaking. Ms. Stenger related that the Council was very pleased and impressed with the performance of the Planning Commission and the staff.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioner Beale commended staff for compiling the 2010-2011 Accomplishments and 2011-2012 Planning Activities report, which was an excellent documentation of the work of the Commission and staff. The Commissioners concurred.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.