

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 as Amended on 2-1-12)

MEETING: Regular Meeting

TIME: Wednesday, January 4, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Jeremy Doty (Chair), Donald Erickson (Vice-Chair), Sean Gaffney, Tina Lee, Ian Morrison, Matthew Nutsch, Scott Winship

Members Excused: Chris Beale, Erle Thompson

Staff Present: Brian Boudet, Shanta Frantz, Liz Kaster, Jana Magoon, Diane Wiatr, Lihuang Wung (CED); Jennifer Kammerzell (Public Works); Brian Boyd (Intern); Jeff Boers (Consultant)

Chair Doty called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The minutes of the regular meeting and public hearing on December 7, 2011 were reviewed. Vice-Chair Erickson suggested that the important reference to “exemption [of parking requirements] for pre-existing buildings in mixed-use centers” was missing and should be added back to the paragraph of “Parking Requirements for Eating and Drinking”, under the discussion item of “2012 Annual Amendment: #2012-7 Technical Amendments and Refinements”. The minutes were approved with the proposed amendments as shown below:

2. 2012 Annual Amendment: #2012-7 Technical Amendments and Refinements

Parking Requirements for Eating and Drinking – Ms. Magoon stated that the proposed amendment would reduce the parking requirements for eating and drinking establishments from 10 stalls to 4 stalls, per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area. The intent is to correct an inadvertent error when the Code was amended in 2002, in that the calculation basis for said parking requirement was changed from “patron serving area” to “gross floor area”, but the numeric value for the stalls was not changed accordingly, hence the dramatic increase in the parking quantity requirements. Discussion ensued and included such issues as whether said parking requirements are applicable to the downtown area and the mixed-use centers, whether pre-existing businesses should be exempt from said requirements, and that neighborhood and business districts that are potentially affected by the proposed amendment would need to be notified. In addition, the Commission expressed interest in considering an expansion of the current exemption for pre-existing buildings in the Mixed-Use Centers, which was adopted in 1996 and has been very successful in those areas. The Commission concurred with the proposed amendment.



GENERAL BUSINESS

1. 2012 Annual Amendment: #2012-03 Transportation Element

Diane Wiatr, Long Range Planning, recognized members of the Bike and Pedestrian Action Committee in the audience and made special note of the work that they have accomplished in aiding staff in the development of the proposed amendments to the Mobility Master Plan section of the Transportation Element.

Ms. Wiatr stated that the proposed changes to the Transportation Element included (a) update to Bicycle Priority List; (b) change in the priority of the Pedestrian List and the Intersection List; and (c) changes to the Unfunded Projects List. She provided an overview of the progress that has been made since the City Council approved the Mobility Master Plan and explained the funding that has been used in getting the work done. She highlighted the progress that has been made on each of the "6Es", i.e., Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Equity.

Liz Kaster, Long Range Planning, presented the proposed changes to the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Intersection priority lists. She reviewed the criteria for the prioritization of those projects. She sampled the next 10 bicycle projects and illustrated their cumulative effects on Tacoma's Bicycle Network. She also described the partnerships and collaboration between the City and various stakeholders, interested entities, and special programs and events, in moving forward and making Tacoma a safe and accessible city for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Jennifer Kammerzell, Public Works, presented the proposed changes to the Unfunded Projects List. She explained the rationale used in developing the priority list for street projects, how input from neighborhood councils and interested groups is used, funding mechanism used, and the time period that the projects cover.

Discussion ensued. Staff responded to a number of comments, questions and inquiries raised by the Commissioners, such as:

- What incentives are in place to aid in the development of a plan to promote the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation?
- What are the funding strategies for the improvement projects?
- The Commissioners also commended staff for doing an amazing job on developing a plan that promotes alternatives to using cars.
- Tacoma can learn from Seattle's experience in providing zoning bonuses to encourage private development of bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly environment, facilities and accommodations.
- The development opportunities as indicated in the South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS that is currently underway could be used as a mechanism to fund some of these Mobility Master Plan projects.
- The McKinley Hill to Downtown Tacoma project (#14 on the Unfunded Project List) should include sidewalks on both sides, if not already planned, in order to accommodate walking along the McKinley Park and toward such attractions as the Tacoma Dome and the LeMay Museum.

By a unanimous vote, the Commission approved, and authorized for public review, the staff report and the proposed amendments to the Transportation Element, as presented.

2. Large Scale Retail Moratorium

Brian Boudet, Long Range Planning, presented the draft recommendation package for the Commission's review and approval. The package included a letter of recommendation, the Commission's Findings and Recommendations report, the proposed amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code, and a map depicting areas affected by the proposed code amendments. Mr. Boudet reviewed the proposed code amendments and highlighted some of the provisions intended to address such issues as public notification and input, public signs, design and development standards, parking, potential expansion of existing businesses, and vision and goals of the mixed-use centers and neighborhoods.

Vice-Chair Erickson pointed out that the second paragraph of the draft letter of recommendation stated that the City Council directed the Planning Commission to focus its review of large scale retail businesses on utilizing size limits for such developments. He suggested that the word "directed" does not accurately reflect what the Planning Commission's true role is – that of giving recommendations as an independent advisory body. After some discussion, the Commission suggested that the word be changed to "requested." A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft recommendation package, as amended, and forward it to the City Council for consideration. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioners Morrison and Winship recusing and Commissioners Beale and Thompson absent.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Chair Doty acknowledged receipt of the following announcements:

1. Community Meeting: "MLK Subarea Plan & EIS", Thursday, January 5, 2012, 5:00-7:00 p.m. Evergreen State College Tacoma, Campus, Lyceum Room (1210 Sixth Avenue)

COMMENTS BY LONG-RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

Mr. Boudet reviewed the purpose of the Community Meeting on January 5 regarding the MLK Subarea Plan & EIS. He also provided an overview of the project, including the goal, the process and schedule, the public involvement and stakeholders, and the issues and challenges. He said that the Planning Commission will be heavily involved with this project.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

The Commissioners expressed great interest in the MLK Subarea Plan & EIS project, and provided some comments concerning the coordination of the project with the South Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS, the uniqueness of the MLK Mixed-Use Center, the involvement of MultiCare and St. Joseph Hospital, the importance of aesthetics and urban design, and the importance of having the right planning tool to help stakeholders visualize the outcomes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.