

Members

Donald Erickson, Chair
 Sean Gaffney, Vice-Chair
 Theresa Dusek
 Benjamin Fields
 Mark Lawlis
 Tina Lee
 Matthew Nutsch
 Erle Thompson
 Scott Winship



Minutes

Tacoma Planning Commission

Community and Economic Development Department

Ricardo Noguera, Director
 Peter Huffman, Assistant Director
 Charles Solverson, P.E., Building Official

Public Works and Utilities Representatives

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

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(Approved on 11-7-12)

MEETING: Regular Meeting and Public Hearing

TIME: Wednesday, October 17, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Donald Erickson (Chair), Theresa Dusek, Ben Fields, Mark Lawlis, Matthew Nutsch, Erle Thompson, Scott Winship

Members Absent: Sean Gaffney (Vice-Chair), Tina Lee

Staff Present: Elliott Barnett, Brian Boudet, Lihuang Wung (BLUS); Tadd Wille, Cindy Cusick (Finance); Mike Carey, Josh Diekmann, Jennifer Kammerzell, Lorna Mauren (Public Works)

Chair Erickson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The minutes of the Regular Meeting and Planning Commission Retreat on October 3, 2012 were approved as submitted.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion Project

Val Batey, Sound Transit, provided an overview of the Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion Project, which would extend the 1.6-mile light rail that currently serves six stations between the Tacoma Dome Station and the Theatre District. The purposes of the project are to improve mobility and transit ridership, serve underserved neighborhoods and communities, stimulate economic development, and establish eligibility for federal funds. Ms. Batey stated that the project has gone through the Early Scoping process and is currently at the Alternative Screening stage. She briefly described the preliminary alternative corridors where the light rail could potentially extend to, including the North End, North End Central, North Downtown Central, South Downtown Central, South Downtown to MLK, South End, Eastside, and Pacific Highway. The next stages include Alternative Analysis, Alternatives Evaluation and Preferred Corridor Identification, with the Sound Transit Board's decision scheduled for spring of 2013, and there would be opportunities for public comments along the way.

The Commissioners suggested a number of aspects that should be taken into account in the project, such as the City's mixed-use centers policies, the subarea plans currently underway (in the MLK neighborhood, South Downtown and North Downtown), the transit-oriented development principles, the demographic diversity, as well as the existing and future transit-dependent population.



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2. Urban Forestry Landscaping Code Update

Brian Boudet provided an update on the project, which was last reviewed by the Commission in May 2012. He provided an overview of urban forestry as a major policy emphasis at the State and local levels, and the key policy objectives contained in the Urban Forestry Policy Element of the Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2010. He, along with Mike Carey from the Environmental Services Division, reviewed the multiple facets of urban forestry policy implementation, including the Urban Forestry Management Plan, Incentives and Assessment, Regulations, Education and Outreach, Incentives and Assistance, and the City of Tacoma Leading by Example. They provided a status report for each aspect, focusing on Regulations, which involved the proposed changes to the landscaping-related provisions of the Land Use Regulatory Code. They also reported on the schedule and outreach approach for this project, as well as a couple of examples of the types of education/outreach materials (rain garden brochure) and incentive programs (tree coupons) the City is pursuing.

(At 5:00 p.m., the Commission suspended the rules to consider the public hearing item on the agenda. After the public hearing, the discussion of this item resumed.)

The Commissioners generally expressed appreciation for the revised approach for the project; the increased focus on education and incentives, tree variety and maintenance, and City projects; and the reduced emphasis on increased development requirements, particularly on single-family homeowners. They noted that it appears to respond to the concerns expressed by the community, the Commission, and the City Council earlier this year and more appropriately reflect the intent and policies of the Urban Forestry Element. They also brought up several questions and comments, such as on-line applications for landscaping, permits for tree removal, tree planting in wetland areas, planting requirements for development projects, alternatives for contractors such as the in-lieu fees, and the reduced need for City oversight on those organizations that have their own urban forestry plans in place.

Chair Erickson acknowledged that the public hearing for the proposed code amendment is tentatively scheduled for February 2013, and requested that the Commissioners be provided sufficient opportunities to review the proposal prior to the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Capital Facilities Program for 2013-2018

At 5:00 p.m., Chair Erickson opened the public hearing for the Capital Facilities Program (CFP) for 2013-2018. Tadd Wille, Budget Officer, Finance Department, made a staff presentation, including an overview of the CFP in general, a summary of the proposed amendments for the 2013-2018 CFP, the project selection criteria and the 14 Comprehensive Plan Tie-in Questions, a brief description of each of the 18 projects proposed for inclusion in the CFP, the public comments received to date, and the next steps. The public comments received to date involved four transportation projects, of which an overview and the corresponding staff responses were provided by Jennifer Kammerzell, Public Works Department.

Chair Erickson called for public testimony. No one testified. Chair Erickson closed the public hearing.

The Commissioners proceeded to discuss the public comments received to date. Commissioner Nutsch spoke on the imminent need for one of the four transportation projects concerning the "McKinley Hill to Downtown Tacoma – Complete Sidewalks." After discussion, the Commissioners voted unanimously to request that this project be included in the 2013-2018 CFP. The Commissioners also voted unanimously to approve the draft Letter of Recommendation to transmit the 2013-2018 CFP, as amended, to the City Council for consideration for adoption as part of the City's biennial budget for 2013-2014.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Chair Erickson acknowledged receipt of the following information:

1. Planning Commission Tentative Agenda for November 7, 2012.

Lihuang Wung stated that the City Council Study Session concerning the Planning Commission's Accomplishments and Work Program originally scheduled for October 23, 2012 has been rescheduled to December 11, 2012.

COMMENTS BY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING DIVISION

Mr. Wung explained the processes for the preparation, coordination, review and adoption of the Capital Facilities Program for 2013-2018 that involved numerous projects, multiple City departments, and various outside agencies. He expressed staff's appreciation for the Commissioners' understanding of the tight timeline and working with staff to accomplish the Commission's review in two meetings.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Chair Erickson shared with the Commissioners what he had learned at the 2012 Conference of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association, held on October 11-12, 2012.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.