

Members

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



Minutes

Tacoma Planning Commission

Community and Economic Development Department

Martha Anderson, Interim 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

747 Market Street, Room 1036
Tacoma, WA 98402-3793
253-591-5200 (phone) / 253-591-2002 (fax)
www.cityoftacoma.org/planning

Approved on August 1, 2012

MEETING: Regular Meeting and Public Hearing

TIME: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, Tacoma Municipal Building, 1st FL
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Members Present: Donald Erickson (Chair), Sean Gaffney (Vice-Chair), Theresa Dusek, Ben Fields, Tina Lee, Matthew Nutsch, Erle Thompson, Scott Winship

Staff Present: Brian Boudet, Dave Johnson, Jana Magoon, Ian Munce, Lucas Shadduck, Lisa Spadoni, Lihuang Wung, Noah Yacker (BLUS); Josh Diekmann (Public Works)

Chair Erickson called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. The minutes of the regular meeting on June 6, 2012 were approved as submitted. Sean Gaffney & Ben Fields were sworn in by Doris Sorum, City Clerk.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Development and Permitting Activity Report – Jana Magoon, Land Use Administrator, explained how the codes that Commissioners work on impact and control development within the community. Ms. Magoon used diagrams and charts to provide an overview of the land use permitting activity for the first six-months of the year. She highlighted in her presentation the trends that are occurring in land use permitting and noted specific projects that might be of interest to the Commissioners. Ms. Magoon also noted that the Conditional Use Permit requirement for large scale retail uses, which had a significant amount of input from the Planning Commission, is now being used for the first time for an expansion proposal at the new McClendon's Hardware on Pearl Street.

Lisa Spadoni, Principal Planner, highlighted specific projects that are occurring in the Mixed-Use Centers, where the regulations were recently updated. She provided the current status of some major projects, including the Franciscan medical office building and parking garage, Community Health Center, and Tacoma General expansions in the MLK Neighborhood Center and the Wal-Mart shopping center project in the Tacoma Central/Allenmore Community Center. The Commissioners asked about how the City responds to violations of



the Code? Ms. Spadoni explained that there is a Code Compliance process in place to take care of violations. That process was updated just a few years ago to provide a more predictable and efficient enforcement process. The Commissioners thanked staff and expressed their appreciation for the format of the materials and presentation.

David Johnson, Assistant Manager for BLUS, explained the building permit process and used graphs to highlight the yearly report of permit activity. He also highlighted current trends, which are slightly positive, and reviewed some of the past activity.

- 2. Code Streamlining 2012** – In response to the Commission’s request from the previous meeting, Noah Yacker, Assistant Planner, provided an overview of some additional background materials regarding the 2012 Code Streamlining project and particularly the “work/live and live/work” components. He described a number of examples from various cities that represent the kinds of projects the proposed changes in the land use code are designed to promote. Commissioner Nutsch asked about the proposed parking requirements and whether they would prevent someone from adding parking if they wanted. Mr. Yacker indicated that the purpose of the code is to allow for the addition of an accessory residential unit (work-live) or an accessory commercial use (live-work) without being required to add parking. This would not prevent the addition of parking if that was consistent with other applicable code provisions.

Chairman Erickson asked if the proposed regulations, which relate to the conversion of buildings from one use to another, would apply only to historic buildings or whether it would also apply to other existing buildings and/or new buildings being constructed. He noted that in many cases, such as the recent proposed parking amendments, these types of regulations only apply to sites or buildings constructed before a particular date. Mr. Yacker and Mr. Ian Munce, Acting Long-Range Planning Division Manager, indicated that the current draft does not include any specific time/age limitation, as it was intended to reflect a broad proposal for the purposes of public notice and comment, but following the public hearing the Commission could elect to include further limitations on these provisions.

The Commission asked a few other clarifying questions about the proposal and about some of the recent projects that include live/work or work/live spaces, which Mr. Yacker addressed. The Commissioners thanked staff for the additional materials, which help clarify the proposed amendments

PUBLIC HEARING

At 5:00 p.m., Chair Erickson called to order the public hearing on the Code Streamlining 2012 proposal. Noah Yacker briefly summarized the proposed land use code amendments and the rationale for changing the Code. He outlined the three components of the code amendments: (1) “Live/work and work/live” regulations; (2) SEPA environmental review thresholds; and, (3) Commercial parking requirements.

The chair then called for public testimony.

Shawn Hoey, Master Builders Association, expressed their support for the proposed code changes, especially the section on SEPA threshold increases because it would further streamline the permitting process for builders. He offered commendation to City staff for a job well done.

Sharon Winters, Historic Tacoma, indicated that her organization is strongly supportive of the “live/work and work/live” component but added the caveat that her organization would like the proposed changes to be limited to existing, older buildings rather than new construction, mainly because they feel that the older buildings are under-utilized and the current changes in this amendment will help address this issue. Ms. Winters commended staff for all the hard work that they put in to developing this amendment.

Jori Adkins, owner and renovator of older buildings, expressed her approval of the proposed “live/work and work/live” amendment and has some ideas for this kind of renovation of old buildings in the Tacoma Dome District. She wants to encourage people to have business storefronts and be able to have living space in back. This amendment will encourage the development of and investment in Tacoma’s older neighborhoods.

Rich Semple, renovator in the Tacoma Dome District, indicated that he is a strong advocate of the “live/work and work/live” component of this proposal and asked the Commission to put the amendment through. He wants to see older buildings be utilized, both as an economic development tool and for safety of neighborhoods. This amendment will also be a “good first step” in generating more interest in the Downtown Area.

Dr. Jane Moore, a member of the Sustainability Commission, supports the “live/work and work/live” and parking exemption proposals because they are very compatible with the goals and ideas put forth in the Climate Action Plan. She also expressed some reservations about the SEPA threshold changes because her group questions whether adoption of this amendment may reduce protections of the environment.

Randy Cook, representative of AIA Southwest Washington Chapter, supports the “live/work and work/live” proposal. His organization has provided a letter in support of the adoption of the amendments as he generally agrees with the previous speakers about the benefits on this amendment. He also outlined some of the reasons he feels the amendment is a good fit for the City and strongly approves on behalf of AIA Southwest Washington.

Patricia Lecy-Davis, Downtown resident and business owner, indicated her support for the “live/work and work/live” component of the proposal because it supports increased density. She has a commercial building that she lives in and has a business in and that anything that can remove barriers to living Downtown would be helpful.

Chair Erickson closed the public hearing and stated that written comments may be submitted until 5:00 p.m. on July 20, 2012.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Chair Erickson acknowledged receipt of the following information/announcements:

1. The draft list of 12 applications for amending the Comprehensive Plan and/or Land Use Code for 2013 (the “2013 Annual Amendment”)

COMMENTS BY LONG-RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

None.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Chairman Erickson updated everyone on what happened at the City Council Meeting concerning Medical Cannabis. He summarized the responses and the actions that the Council took as a result of the completed packet that was submitted to them by the Planning Commission and the Task Force. Chair Erickson noted that the Council cited many of the same concerns expressed by the Planning Commissioners. The Council is considering letting the Moratorium expire and addressing this more as a code enforcement issue under the Nuisance Code instead of treating it as a land use issue. However, the Council indicated that this alternative approach is still a “work in progress” because of the many complexities involved.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.