



## **MINUTES** (Approved on 1-22-14)

**TIME:** Wednesday, January 8, 2014, 4:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Room 335, Tacoma Municipal Building  
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402  
**PRESENT:** Sean Gaffney (Chair), Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Chris Beale, Donald Erickson, Benjamin Fields (arrived at 4:50), Tina Lee (excused at 4:45), Alexandria Teague, Stephen Wamback  
**ABSENT:** Erle Thompson

### **A. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Gaffney called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

### **B. QUORUM CALL**

A quorum was declared.

### **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the regular meeting (including a field trip) on December 18, 2013 were reviewed, and approved with the following revisions proposed by Commissioner Erickson to better reflect the context of the discussion:

**"2. Urban Forestry Landscaping Code Update .....** They discussed that it would be desirable to incentivize private property owners to help maintain trees on public rights-of-way; expressed interest in seeing a proposal for street tree requirements for M-2 and PMI districts; suggested that the width of planting strips in the current proposal, i.e., 4 feet, is not adequate for larger trees; and, reiterated that street trees should be placed in the right-of-way whenever possible, including in planted medians."

### **D. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **1. Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion Project Update**

Sue Comis, Chelsea Levy and Erin Hunter of Sound Transit provided an update of the Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion Project. Ms. Comis reviewed the timeline and goals of the project, alternative route alignments along the North Downtown Central Corridor, and the criteria for route alignment evaluation. Sound Transit is scheduled to identify the route alignment(s) in February 2014 to advance into the SEPA/NEPA environmental process. Ms. Hunter advised the Commissions of the public involvement process for the project and reminded them of the open house on January 9, 2014.

The Commissioners provided some feedback on the route alignments and evaluation criteria, and began to deliberate their recommendations to the City Council. With the information received, and based on the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, they felt that it would be more appropriate to offer additional thoughts on the criteria for the evaluation of alignments, rather than recommending specific alignments. The Commissioners suggested that the selected alignments should offer the best opportunity to maximize economic development, incentivize transit-oriented development, minimize the disruption to the urban fabric and urban lifestyles, be consistent with the *Draft Hilltop Subarea Plan*, and ensure the ease of accessibility, especially for the physically challenged.

The Commission inquired about the appropriate timing for forwarding the recommendations to the City Council, and wondered what recommendations, if any, the Transportation Commission is considering. Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, stated that the City Council is scheduled to conduct further review of the project at the study session on January 21, 2014 (the day before the next Commission's meeting) with the intent to recommend a preferred alignment(s) to Sound Transit, and may adopt a resolution to that effect on January 28. He also stated that the Transportation Commission is considering making a recommendation to the City Council but is not scheduled to take an action until its next meeting on January 15, 2014.

Given the circumstances, the Commission resolved unanimously to authorize Chair Gaffney and planning staff to prepare a letter of recommendation summarizing the Commission's suggestions and forward the letter to the City Council by January 15, 2014 for its timely consideration at the study session.

## **2. Point Defiance Park Development Regulation Agreement Policy (Annual Amendment #2014-02)**

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, stated that the key issue associated with this application is that the majority of park zone R-1, which is the case for many of the City's park and open space areas, are in residential zones, but the Point Defiance Park plans include additional features beyond typical residential districts land uses. The objective of the proposed amendments is to provide a clear pathway for Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) to pursue their Destination Point Defiance Park plan which is well-vetted and supported.

Mr. Barnett indicated that staff felt that Development Regulation Agreements (DRAs) are the most appropriate process because the Conditional Use Permit process is not well-suited for the scale and scope of the plans, and because there is no appropriate zoning designation for a rezone process. The DRA process is intended for large scale and scope projects. Mr. Barnett stated that the Commission had expressed the desire to be consulted, which is an option available to the City Council but is not required under the DRA process. Brian Boudet, Manager of the Planning Services Division, added that in most cases, under all the existing processes, the Commission would not have reviewed something like this. However, the Commission does have the authority to set up the policy framework, which is the intent of this current proposal.

Discussion ensued. Chair Gaffney stated he is comfortable with this approach, which is used by other jurisdictions and which provides more predictability for larger processes. Commissioner Erickson expressed some hesitation and reiterated the desire for the Commission to be consulted on DRAs. He requested the opportunity to discuss the Port's Public Access Plan. Through the discussion, it was clarified that DRAs are not applicable in Shoreline Districts, where development is required to go through Shoreline permitting. Commissioner Beale asked if another option be to officially adopt the Destination Point Defiance Plan. Staff stated this could be problematic if it set the expectation that other institutions are required to gain City Council approval on their plans. Commissioner Fields requested a change to draft Policy OS-SP-2 to – "including but not limited to zoo, lodging, eating establishments...". Commissioner Wambach requested staff make sure ownership on Point Defiance Park is described consistently. Commissioner Beale requested staff continue to discuss with MPT the potential for creating a parks zoning designation.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Commission requested that the proposed amendments be modified per discussion and authorized the distribution of the proposed amendments, as modified, for public review.

## **3. Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendments (Annual Amendment #2014-06)**

Mr. Barnett provided that the proposed amendments include two categories of actions in response to the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group (AHPAG), i.e., (a) affordable housing incentives, and (b) removing barriers to small, affordable and transit-oriented housing types. He noted that the AHPAG has recommended decoupling the code development of the Affordable Housing Incentives code from the Annual Amendments, to be developed on its own schedule. The package this

year would include the Affordable Housing Incentives policy framework, and some additional items in the second category.

Mr. Barnett then reviewed, and facilitated the Commission's discussion of, the following components of the proposed amendments:

- First, propose changes to small affordable housing types (reframed from the previous "mini-flats") would add a new parking exemption.
- Second, the Accessible Dwelling Unit (ADU) code proposal includes three changes since last time, including modifying the ADU required parking. After discussing parking requirements extensively, the Commission directed staff to put the proposal out for public review with no parking required for an ADU. The Commission also expressed interest in allowing detached ADUs in single-family zones, to which staff responded this will be part of next year's discussions.
- Third, proposed changes to parking requirements for Group Housing and Multi-family housing would reduce the number of spaces for such uses and providing two bonus options to further reduce required parking.
- Fourth, small lots changes would seek to promote infill while ensuring compatibility with neighborhood character. The Commission requested additional analysis on proposed design standards to ensure neighborhood compatibility, consideration for residential Floor Area Ratio approaches, clarification for how Neighborhood Character would be defined, and examples of buildings meeting the 15% transparency requirement.

The Commission directed staff to work through the comments above and return next time with proposed refinements and additional analysis.

#### **4. Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element (Annual Amendment #2014-08)**

Mr. Barnett provided that the proposed amendments to the Open Space Element include reflecting recent plans and implementation progress; adding inventories, plans and project lists; and enhancing guidance on implementation. He noted that the full project lists and inventory will continue to be refined, along with the Specific Area Plans list. He also distributed two handouts – preliminary comments on the proposal from Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) and an additional plan and code amendments concerning Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). Regarding the latter, Mr. Barnett described proposed changes to the definition of Tacoma Habitat Sending Areas to set up a more qualitative review. Discussion ensued. The Commission then voted unanimously to authorize the distribution of the proposed amendments for public review.

#### **5. Sustainability Code Amendment (Annual Amendment #2014-09)**

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, presented draft amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code, Chapter 13.06.510 Off Street Parking and Storage Areas, and Chapter 13.06.512 Pedestrian and Bicycle Support Standards, as part of the proposed Sustainability Code Amendments. Mr. Atkinson discussed specific amendments that would add requirements and design standards for off-street electric vehicle parking facilities to support ongoing trends and market growth for electric vehicles and require start and end of trip bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle parking and shower and changing facilities. Mr. Atkinson outlined the specific design and location standards, the methodology for calculating the quantity requirements, and benchmarking case studies. The Commission raised questions and expressed some concern over how the electric vehicle standards apply to single family development and cost implications for affordable housing. There was also discussion over different types of charging facilities. The Commission also suggested some minor edits to the bicycle parking ratios and shower and changing facility standards. Staff responded that the Commission's concerns and suggestions would be addressed in the next draft.

## **6. Status of 2014 Annual Amendment**

Brian Boudet, Manager of the Planning Services Division, provided a status report on the Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code for 2014 (“2014 Annual Amendment”), which includes the following eleven applications:

1. Point Ruston Mixed-Use Center (private application)
2. Point Defiance Park Land Use Policies (private application)
3. Growth Strategy and Mixed-Use Centers Review
4. Mixed-Use Centers Code Review (“MUC-Lite”)
5. Land Use Designations (Intensities)
6. Affordable Housing Regulations (Phase 2)
7. Container Port Element
8. Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element
9. Sustainability Code Amendment
10. Urban Forestry Landscaping Code Update
11. Plan and Code Minor Amendments

Mr. Boudet stated that the 2014 Annual Amendment is on schedule for the Planning Commission’s public hearing on March 19, 2014, and recommendation to the City Council in mid-April. To date, the Commission has reviewed the staff analyses, at least once, for all applications but two, i.e., Growth Strategy and Mixed-Use Centers Review (#3) and Land Use Designations (#5). Staff suggested that these two applications be deferred to the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update process for better incorporation into more comprehensive reviews of relevant subjects. The Commission concurred.

## **E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS AND OTHER BUSINESS**

- (a) Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, provided the following information:
- Transportation Commission’s Roles and Responsibilities (PowerPoint slides).
  - Sound Transit Open House on Tacoma LINK Light Rail Expansion Project, January 9, 2014.
  - Agenda for the Planning Commission meeting, January 22, 2014.
  - Agenda for the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee meeting, January 22, 2014.
- (b) Mr. Boudet reported that the City Council reviewed the status of the Hilltop Subarea Plan and EIS project at the study session on January 7, 2014, acknowledged the progress, appreciated the stakeholders’ involvement, and directed staff to ensure the plan is well implemented upon its adoption.

## **F. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.