



MINUTES (Approved on 8-5-15))

TIME: Wednesday, July 15, 2015, 4:00 p.m. (Public Hearing began at approximately 5:00 p.m.)

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

PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Donald Erickson, Meredith Neal, Anna Petersen, Brett Santhuff, Dorian Waller, Scott Winship

ABSENT (EXCUSED): Stephen Wamback (Vice-Chair), Erle Thompson

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. A quorum was declared.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on July 1, 2015 were reviewed and Commissioner Erickson provided corrections to several typos. The minutes were approved as amended.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Billboard Regulations

John Harrington, Planning and Development Services, provided a review of proposed sign code amendments for billboards. Mr. Harrington reviewed that the objectives of the City were to develop new approaches to billboard regulations that would result in new code requirements, fewer billboards, less impact on neighborhoods, incentives to consolidate billboards, and to end litigation with Clear Channel Outdoor (CCO).

Zoning was discussed. A map of the locations for existing billboards was shown and it was noted that billboards were currently allowed in only the three industrial zones and C-2 commercial. Mr. Harrington reviewed that the Billboards Community Working Group (CWG) had selected zones as a priority for removal of billboards including residential, shoreline, and view sensitive overlay zones. The CWG had identified 11 zones where billboards should be allowed including Light Industrial, General Community Commercial, and Planned Development Business Districts. No agreement had been reached by the CWG on whether billboards should be allowed C-1, T, or NCX.

The CWG had reached a consensus to reduce all buffering requirements, but had no consensus for specific recommendations. Mr. Harrington commented that there were residential zones where buffers would not make sense including areas along highways or shielded by topography. It was noted that buffering from historic buildings would preclude any billboards downtown due to the number and proximity of historic buildings. He reviewed the different priority levels for buffers with residential zones given the highest priority and a 300-foot buffer by the CWG.

For dispersal, Mr. Harrington reported that there had been a consensus to reduce the current 500-foot dispersal requirement, but no specific recommendation. For size, CCO had expressed preference for allowing 672 square-foot billboards in all zones and additional flexibility in the dimension and orientation of signs mounted on buildings. For height, CCO had expressed preference for 40 feet in zones outside of PMI, as it was below the maximum height for buildings in C-2 zones and would allow billboards to be seen above street trees.

Chair Beale commented that his preference would be to see staff's recommendations and have Vice-Chair Wambach present for the discussion as he had been a member and co-chair of the CWG. Commissioners concurred on postponing further discussion until a future meeting.

2. 2015 Annual Amendment Package

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, facilitated the Commission's continued discussion and review of the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, as part of the 2015 Annual Amendment.

The Urban Form chapter was discussed. Mr. Atkinson noted that it would focus on where growth was intended to happen and that it touches on the Mixed-Use Center (MUC) Review. The topics included mediating growth and change; providing a safe and attractive environment; providing efficient land use and transportation patterns; accommodating people of all ages and abilities; encouraging high quality design; leveraging arts to create a sense of place; and promoting compact, complete, and connected neighborhoods. Throughout the chapter there were key concepts that focus on the overall development pattern and character like MUCs, employment areas, transit station areas, corridors, open space corridors, signature trails, and historic residential areas. Some key maps were highlighted including the MUC map, the Employment Areas map, and the Parks and Recreation map.

Chair Beale recessed the meeting at 4:57 p.m. Mr. Atkinson later resumed his presentation following the public hearing at 5:12 p.m.

The Land Use Designations Review was discussed. Mr. Atkinson reviewed that there had been a multi-year process to reassess the system of intensities and improve clarity on what the long term plan intent is. During the process staff had identified inconsistencies between the intensities and the zoning. Consideration was also given to patterned corridors; intensifying existing land uses; the 20-minute neighborhood concept; and generally avoiding "downzoning". Some example scenarios were discussed where changes could be proposed to make zoning and Land Use Designations consistent. The future land use map was shown, demonstrating that the city would remain predominantly single family.

The Best Available Science Review was discussed. Some of the recommended changes proposed for the Critical Areas Preservation ordinance included changing the references to the updated 2014 Ecology wetland rating system; updating specific references to be more general; referencing the 2013 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Water Crossing Design Guidelines; and using revised definitions of isolated wetlands in accordance with Washington Department of Ecology guidance. The proposal would include the recommended changes as an attachment to the Comprehensive Plan to provide an opportunity for public comment.

Mr. Atkinson reviewed the comments received from the Commission. Comments fell into mainly three categories: 1. Requests for additional policies including business improvement areas, design review, signage compatibility, and activation of public realm and temporary spaces; 2. Comments about context including the acronyms needing definitions and better context for data; and 3. Organizational changes to chapters including requests to elevate the geological hazard policies in the Environmental Chapter and a number of changes proposed for the Economic Development Element. An additional request from the Commission was the concept of a work program road map. Mr. Atkinson reviewed the requested work program table organized by the Elements and proposed work program items.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson asked if the drop box comments had been incorporated. Mr. Atkinson responded that he had not read them yet, but would in the near future.
- Commissioner Waller asked if they could elaborate on engagement and who they would be targeting. Mr. Atkinson responded that the Equity office would be assisting by looking at the tools and strategies available that could be most effective.
- Chair Beale asked if the Commission would be seeing a finalized version of the draft report from John Owen on MUC typology. Mr. Atkinson responded that they were still working on the feasibility study and incorporating updated data. Chair Beale commented that since it was a significant piece, he didn't want it to get lost. It was noted that it would be identified as a separate document and that the report supported many of the amendments in the Comprehensive Plan.

- Chair Beale commented in agreement with Vice-Chair Wamback's prior recommendation for a specific policy for a of task force in the design review program.
- Chair Beale recommended that staff consider some specific policies for regulations on open space corridors.
- Chair Beale noted the goal to connect city neighborhoods to the trail system and recommended that connecting to city parks should also be part of that goal.

Chair Beale noted that the Commission was being asked to authorize the release of the 2015 Annual Amendment Package for public review and the package included the proposed Narrowmoor Addition Conservation District. He also noted that the West Slope Neighborhood Coalition had submitted a letter, which was included in the agenda as a communication item, requesting that Commissioner Thompson be disqualified from further action on this proposal. Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reported that the West Slope Neighborhood Coalition had requested the recusal of Commissioner Thompson due to his position as Vice-Chair of the Master Builders Association Board which had run a campaign against the proposed Narrowmoor Conservation District. It was noted that Commissioner Winship had disclosed living in the area, but had not recused himself. The City's legal counsel had recommended that both Commissioners Winship and Thompson recuse themselves from further discussion and action on the Conservation District item based on the appearance of fairness, though they were not legally required to do so. Commissioner Winship commented that he had considered recusal, but was inclined to not recuse himself while being measured in comments that he might make. Chair Beale commented that the topic would need to be addressed at a future meeting with Commissioner Thompson present.

To facilitate the Commission's action to release the 2015 Annual Amendment Package for public review and set August 19th as the date for a public hearing, Mr. Wung explained that the package included five categories of subjects, i.e., Comprehensive Plan Update, Mixed-Use Centers Review, Affordable Housing Regulations, Code Cleanup, and Narrowmoor Addition Conservation District. All but the first item had previously been reviewed by the Commission and authorized, individually, for public review. Mr. Wung requested that the Commission consider authorizing the release of the Comprehensive Plan Update for public review before authorizing the entire package, because the votes for individual items can be different from that for the package. Upon receiving the Commission's authorization, staff would compile the text of the proposed amendments, the associated environmental review and other pertinent background information into a Public Review Document, which was expected to be available for review by the end of July, Mr. Wung stated.

Commissioner Erickson motioned to distribute the proposed Comprehensive Plan Update for public review. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Petersen. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Erickson motioned to distribute the 2015 Annual Amendment Package for public review and set August 19th as the date for a public hearing to receive public comment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winship. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Public Hearing – Work-Live/Live-Work Code Amendments

At 4:58 p.m., Chair Beale called the public hearing to order and reviewed the procedures, noting that they would be taking testimony on proposed Work-Live/Live-Work Code Amendments.

Elliott Fitzgerald, Planning Services Division, reviewed that the proposal had been produced to improve upon the Work-Live/Live-Work code amendments originally adopted in 2012. The modifications were developed along with complimentary building code amendments. The proposal released for public review pertained to the land use component of the proposal and was intended to ensure code compatibility between the two regulatory codes. The key changes proposed to the land use code were to address code consistencies and clarifications; clarify that the uses are permitted in zones that allow for the associated mix of uses; and allow the uses in new construction. The next steps were noted with written comments accepted up to July 22. Chair Beale called for testimony. The following citizen testified:

(1) Gary Knudson, Historic Tacoma:

Mr. Knudson commented that the language being modified originated during the formulation of the subarea plans to incentivize work in existing buildings. He noted that the work-live use follows the

models of other jurisdictions to be able to incrementally occupy and upgrade existing structures. He felt that the new language was confusing the initial intent by lumping adaptive reuse and new construction together and that market pressure for new construction could imperil existing buildings. Mr. Knudson recommended the separation of the two provisions, existing and new, to maintain the original intent. He reiterated that they wanted to maximize the protection of existing buildings.

Seeing no one else coming forward, Chair Beale closed the public hearing at 5:11 p.m.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Wung provided an update on the following items:

- a) A letter had been received from Congressman Adam Smith regarding the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Plan winning the 2015 VISION 2040 Award.
- b) A tour of the Tacoma Mall area was being considered for the Planning Commission and a poll on preferred times would be sent out.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

At 6:22 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.