



MINUTES (Approved as Amended on 10-7-15)

TIME: Wednesday, September 16, 2015, 4:00 p.m.

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

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

ABSENT:

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. A quorum was declared.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting and Commission tour on September 2, 2015 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Billboard Task Force Recommendation

Vice-Chair Wamback, designated Chair of the Billboard Task Force, reviewed that the work of the Task Force was to build on the work of the Billboards Community Working Group (CWG) with an awareness of the past and the role of the Planning Commission. He noted a number of key ideas from the discussion including that off-premise signage needs to respect the urban context; off-premise advertising shouldn't intrude on people's homes; amortization is a valuable tool and should not be abandoned; the Task Force avoided identifying specific signs that they wanted removed; the proposed exchange mechanism would allow Clear Channel Outdoor to adjust locations for signs and gain conforming signs; and if the exchange mechanism failed they would still have the options of amortization or accepting the sign faces that already exist.

John Harrington, Development Services Division, facilitated a review to consider releasing the Task Force's recommendations for public review and set October 7, 2015 as the date for a public hearing.

Mr. Harrington reviewed the recommended exchange ratios for each square foot of non-conforming signage removed including 2:1 for wall mounted square footage granted downtown; 1.5:1 for wall mounted square footage granted in the same district or new zone; 1:1.5 for relocated pole mounted square footage; and a 1:1 ratio for wall mounted square footage granted in NCX, permitted only if billboards have been completely removed from residential, shoreline, and C-1 zones. He noted that the Task Force had recommended keeping the amortization clause in the regulations with a revised sunset date.

Wall signs were discussed. Mr. Harrington reviewed that the Task Force had recommended they not be allowed on the primary façade of a building and that there be a minimum distance of 8 feet between the ground and the bottom of the sign. Commissioner Erickson added that the Task Force had concurred that windows and openings should not be obstructed by wall signs.

Mr. Harrington reviewed the Task Force recommendations for maintenance, design, landscaping, dispersal, size, lighting, buffers, height, and location. For maintenance, the Task Force had recommended requiring graffiti cleanup within 48 hours of notice of violation. For design, recommendations included prohibiting wall signs on primary facades; prohibition of off-set faces; only one pole for free standing signs; and allowing only wall mounted billboards for sites with an existing freestanding on-site sign. For landscaping, the Task Force had concurred with the CWG recommendation to remove the required landscaping buffer for a billboard support base. For dispersal, recommendations included 500 feet for faces over 300 square feet; 300 feet for faces 300 square feet or less; and 200 feet for wall mounted faces within the same view corridor. For size, recommendations included 300 square feet in non-industrial zones and relocated signs in an industrial zone; a maximum of 672 square feet for exiting signs in industrial zones; and wall mounted signs over 672 square feet with staff review. For lighting, recommendations included requiring LED or equivalent lighting; requiring lights be off between midnight and 5 a.m.; and timers or other devices to keep lights off during the day. For buffers, recommendations included 250 foot buffers for all billboard prohibited zones, prohibited overlay districts, and sensitive uses including historically significant churches. For height, Mr. Harrington reviewed that the Task Force had recommended a 30 foot maximum height within 500 feet of Residential, SHR, VSD, HIST, CONS districts with wall mounted signs allowed higher with staff review; a 35 foot maximum for signs more than 500 feet from Residential, SHR, VSD, HIST, and CONS districts; requiring that wall mounted signs be at least 8 feet from the ground; and not retaining the 45 foot maximum height in PMI zones. For Location, the Task Force had recommended permitting wall signs in NCX after certain conditions had been met.

Mr. Harrington reported that the Task Force was recommending future consideration of pedestrian scale signs less than 32 square feet in all districts where billboards would be allowed in addition to C-1 and DR. He noted additional Task Force recommendations including that all illegal signs be removed before any signs could be exchanged and keeping a cap on billboard faces and existing square footage. Additionally, he noted that more information was still needed from the State on what impact MAP 21 would have.

Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, recommended that they include a specific number for the amortization sunset clause, noting that previous period had been ten years. Discussion ensued. The Commission concurred on 3 years for the 17 nonconforming billboards in prohibited zones and 5 years for all other nonconforming billboards.

Commissioner Erickson made a motion to authorize the release of the recommendations, including the changes discussed, and set the public hearing date for October 7. Additions to the recommendations included: an amortization period of 3 years for nonconforming billboards in prohibited zones and 5 years for the remaining; a minimum distance of 8 feet from the ground for wall signs; wall signs not covering window openings; large wall signs allowed in all districts with staff review; a 35 foot height limit in PMI; no cantilevered signs with the pole outside of the width of the sign; clarification on exchange ratios; pedestrian scale signage identified as an item for future discussion; and requiring that signs be a minimum distance of 10 feet above the road. Commissioner Neal seconded the motion. The Motion was approved unanimously.

Vice-Chair Wamback motioned to dissolve the Task Force. Commissioner Petersen seconded. The Motion was approved unanimously.

2. Joint Session with the Transportation Commission

At 5:15 p.m., Chair Beale and Jane Moore, Co-Chair of the Transportation Commission, called the joint meeting to order. The purpose of the joint session was to review public comments received during the public hearing process for the 2015 Annual Amendment specifically related to the Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, noted that comments had been received from the Port of Tacoma, Dome District, the Parking Technical Advisory Group, and other stakeholders. Updates to the Trails/Recreation and 20-Minute Neighborhoods maps were reviewed. Mr. Atkinson discussed the new Centers of Local Importance map, which was based on typology within Countywide planning policies and being proposed as an appendix to the TMP.

Joshua Diekmann, Public Works, discussed a proposed mapping change to illustrate all projects included in the document and include maps for each mode. He noted that there were also some minor changes to the project list and some changes proposed based on comments from the Port. For concerns received regarding safety and level of service, Mr. Diekmann responded that urban areas are the best place for growth to occur with the most amenities, pedestrian crossings, and the lowest travel speeds. He reported that as urban areas have increased in population they have shown a decrease in the rate of pedestrian fatalities. Discussing how System Completeness addresses development impacts, Mr. Diekmann commented that the TMP includes a feedback loop to measure the performance of the system and add projects to address deficiencies. He reviewed comments received from the Port including making sure that they are not omitting other policies; a question on the wisdom of a bike facility on Taylor Way; a request that more projects from the Emergency Response/ITS study be included in the TMP project list; and a concern that tide flats projects are often low on the project prioritization list.

At 5:30 p.m., the joint session concluded and the regular meeting of the Planning Commission resumed.

3. 2015 Annual Amendment to Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reviewed that at the previous meeting they had provided a summary of issues and concerns from the public comments received at the August 19, 2015 public hearing and through the comment period ending on September 11, 2015. He reported that staff would be providing responses to the comments and suggesting modifications to proposed amendments where appropriate.

Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, discussed comments regarding the proposed Narrowmoor Conservation District. He reviewed that the majority of comments were supportive. Comments in opposition had focused on the burden on property owners and developers; the complexity of complying with the requirements; additional costs to property owners and to the City; and concern that the Conservation District is only for the protection of views. Responding to the concern that the existing covenants should be adequate, Mr. McKnight noted that opinions on the issue had been mixed. Mr. McKnight reported a suggestion that language for the review of variances and conditional uses should reflect the fact that there are historic districts in the City and should aim to be consistent with historic preservation concerns. On the question of whether the 60 foot minimum lot width would halt subdivision, a review had found that the typical lot width was 100 feet and that the proposed 60 foot lot width would indeed prevent subdivision. Mr. McKnight suggested that as an alternative, they could remove the lot width provision altogether and instead rely on the 50 foot width that is already in the R-1 zoning. Commissioners concurred with removing the 60 foot lot width requirement.

Molly Harris, Planning Services Division, discussed Code Cleanup which had received comments from the Master Builders Association and the Puget Creek Restoration Society. In response to The Master Builder's Association's suggestion of tying improvements to the six year Transportation Improvement Plan and considering a fee in lieu option, Ms. Harris responded that the recommendation of staff was that it would need further discussion and analysis with the Planning and Transportation Commissions. In response to the comment from the Puget Creek Restoration Society, the staff recommendation was to leave the sunset clause and that financial incentives would need further review. She reviewed minor additions recommended by staff and the Planning Commission that were primarily corrections and clarifications.

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, discussed the Mixed-Use Centers (MUC) Study. He noted that the study did not include any code amendments, but focused on implementation and achieving the goals. He reviewed that the majority of all comments had been on the issue of MUCs, specifically issues related to building height in Proctor. He reported that the Commission had forwarded a letter to the City Council and the issue of building heights in Proctor would be the subject of future discussions.

Comments related to Proctor were discussed. In response to concerns about the impact of increased traffic on public safety, Mr. Atkinson reported that while typically the number of incidents does rise with increased density, the overall rate decreases. He noted that increased congestion and parking issues were anticipated, but there was the capacity in the system to accommodate anticipated growth. In response to concerns about schools and public services, he commented that they were proposing policy

updates to the Public Facilities and Services chapter. On the issue of whether tax incentives were necessary, Mr. Atkinson reported that only the 8 year Multifamily Tax Exemption is currently viable in many of the MUCs. In response to comments that some centers are already achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Atkinson clarified that the number of households needed to support a MUC in the Plan is a minimum and not a goal. In response to concerns on sustainability and sprawl, he noted the benefits of concentrating growth in MUCs. Chair Beale asked how staff interpreted comments like “we don’t want to be like Seattle”. Mr. Atkinson responded that it could be in relation to the rate of change or the displacement of small businesses.

Mr. Atkinson reported that the recommendation was to proceed with the Comprehensive Plan Update and MUC Study on their current tracks. He noted that the Commission had the opportunity to highlight issues where the Council could respond and recommended highlighting three key ideas: design review; financial tools like local improvement districts and transportation impact fees; and subarea planning with the priority to Neighborhood Centers. Commissioners concurred on prioritizing design review. Chair Beale suggested that they could consider making infrastructure improvements that would be required of development when redevelopment occurs as they look at the Capital Facilities Program and consider how to implement the centers. Vice-Chair Wamback recommended the word “compatible” be taken out of the description of Neighborhood Centers as it was too subjective and not consistent with the policies. He asked if the typology for centers was appropriate as Neighborhood Centers were being interpreted as being centers that only serve the immediate surroundings. Mr. Atkinson responded that they could review it to clarify that it was a design component and not a trade market component. Commissioners concurred that the neighborhood planning context should be retained as part of a longer term priority.

At 6:34 p.m. Chair Beale recessed the meeting. The meeting resumed at 6:46 p.m.

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, reviewed public comments concerning Affordable Housing regulations and staff’s responses. He reviewed that the North Slope and Historic Districts had expressed concern on the potential impacts to Historic Districts specifically for duplexes and lot size reduction. Additional concerns included historic character; density, parking, and infrastructure; property values; rental versus ownership; and the nexus with affordable housing. They had received comments in support of detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), lot size flexibility, and affordable housing incentives.

Historic Districts were discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that the proposals had included design criteria, consultation with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and no demolitions of contributing structures. Staff recommended changes included removing the 3500 square foot lot size reduction; 2 and 3-family options; City Historic Preservation Officer review of designated and eligible historic homes; removing the cottage housing option; removing the change to the HMR-SRD definition; and limiting the Historic Districts to one ADU for the pilot infill program.

Lot size flexibilities were discussed. Mr. Barnett reported that staff was recommending to not count critical areas and buffers for lot size flexibility. For the Special Review District (SRD) Small Lot proposal, staff was recommending removing the proposed 3500 square foot lot size and instead allowing the alley area credit proposal. Mr. Boudet commented that the reason for removing the small lot proposal from R2-SRD was because it could possibly lead to demolition of existing homes. It was noted that there was currently no historic review for demolition permits in the R2-SRD zoning.

The infill pilot program was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that the proposal included limiting the infill program to 3 of each type citywide, design review with consultation, and discretionary permits with notification. The infill program would halt once the threshold of three of each type of infill had been met, followed by review and consideration for any needed code updates. Staff recommended changes included City Historic Preservation Officer consultation; 1000 foot distribution between each type of infill; parking and shading impacts considered; clarification of green features; and a requirement that Infill Design Guidelines be completed first. Commissioners expressed preference for duplexes designed to look like single family homes. Chair Beale asked if requiring LEED gold would significantly increase the construction cost of ADUs. Mr. Barnett responded that it would not be required for ADUs, but would be for Two Family, Cottage Housing, or Multifamily in R-3. Commissioners concurred to limiting the green features requirement for LEED gold certification to cottage housing and multifamily housing.

For detached ADUs, Mr. Barnett reviewed that staff recommended changes including a minimum lot width of 50 feet. It was noted that [detached](#) ADUs would only be allowed in rear yards, but alley access would not be required. Commissioners concurred with limiting vehicular access for Detached ADUs to alleys for any lot with alley access or to a shared driveway. Commissioners agreed to allow only one kind of detached accessory building: either a garage, ADU, or a structure that integrates both.

Affordable Housing Incentives, upzones, and process enhancements were discussed. Comments from the Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group (AHPAG) had included concerns about upzones requiring affordability that would require that developers provide units without being given extra development capacity to offset the cost. Staff was recommending removing the upzones affordability requirement. Chair Beale commented that he would rather retain the affordability component and make adjustments based on feedback from developers. Discussion ensued. Commissioners concurred with keeping the upzones affordability requirement, and asked staff to develop alternatives.

Connie Brown, Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group, was invited to speak by Chair Beale. Ms. Brown commented that the group had worked on the recommendations, assigning priorities and looking at a wide range of things that the city might want to consider. She noted that the infill options that had resulted in public outcry had been medium priority, at best. Ms. Brown commented that high priority recommendations made in 2010 had not been thoroughly addressed. Chair Beale asked if there were any things that the AHPAG would recommend they do differently. Ms. Brown responded that she would like to see exact numbers for what incentives can be offered in order for the developer to provide affordable housing. She also recommended promoting partnerships with the city and private developers to include affordable housing.

The fee in lieu amount was discussed. Carey Jenkins, Housing Division Manager, commented that the methodology was being investigated by a consultant and a specific number would be forthcoming at the end of September. He reported that the language was being finished and would be available shortly. Mr. Jenkins noted that they would be looking at some of the recommendations in the financing components of the AHPAG report, ranking them by probability of success, and asking the City Council to allow their housing group to identify ways to implement those programs.

Two- and Three-family development was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed the staff recommended changes that included options for Conditional Use Permit criteria in Special Review Districts and the Pilot Program in R-2 Districts. Commissioners agreed to limit duplex and triplex development in SRD districts to non-contributing structures with City Historic Preservation Officer and Landmarks Preservation Commission review. Commissioners agreed to duplex development in R-2 with the requirements of a 6,000 square foot lot size.

Mr. Barnett reviewed recommended changes for other infill approaches. Recommendations included that they remove the Cottage Housing Option for Historic Districts; clarify the design intent for Multifamily in R-3; cap the Planned Residential Development (PRD) density bonus at 1.75; and clarify PRD sustainability features. Commissioners concurred with including green sustainability requirements for Multifamily in R-3. Vice-Chair Wambach suggested providing PRDs a density bonus of 2 if they were entirely xeriscaped and at the highest level of storm water management.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Boudet reported that the Federal Transit Administration had selected Tacoma to receive two million dollars for the Link light rail expansion to coordinate design for the streetscape improvements. He noted \$200,000 allocated to seed an economic opportunity center that could include apprenticeship and training programs to help residents prepare for the construction associated with the light rail expansion.

Mr. Barnett extended an invitation for Commission members to attend Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan Design Workshops that would be held at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center Auditorium on September 21, 22, and 24.

F. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:32 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.