



MINUTES (Approved as Amended on 3-4-15)

TIME: Wednesday, February 18, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Donald Erickson, Benjamin Fields,
Meredith Neal, Anna Peterson, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Sean Gaffney, Erle Thompson

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

B. QUORUM CALL

A quorum was declared.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on February 4, 2015 were approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. LID Code Update and Public Works Design Manual Update

Merita Trohimovich and Jim Parvey from Environmental Services provided an update to the Commission on the Low Impact Development (LID) code update and the City of Tacoma Design Manual update. Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, discussed how previous Planning Commission policy discussions and some of the amendments from 2014 would relate to the topics discussed.

Mr. Parvey briefly discussed some of the background elements that were being considered in the update. The new stormwater regulations would require incorporation of LID techniques when developing property. The design manual had not been update since 2004 and much of the effort would seek to address current city policies and requirements and also comply with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit (NPDES).The upcoming permit requires the policy and regulation changes to be in effect by June 30th though the implementation deadline is likely to change. The comment letter from Ecology will give them a hard deadline, likely November 2015.

Ms. Trohimovich discussed the NPDES Permit, received August 2013, which requires them to make LID the common approach to site development. In order to do that, they have been looking at the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) and associated guidance documents. They are also required to update to the Stormwater Management Manual, which has been completed and sent to Ecology for review. The guidance given by the NPDES permit to make LID the commonly preferred approach included revisions designated to minimize impervious surface, native vegetation loss, and stormwater runoff. In Tacoma the proposed approach for implementation included removing barriers found in code and guidance manuals, making equivalent guidance, providing incentives, providing a manual equivalent to the one used by Ecology, and leading by example. Specific changes that would necessary included some changes throughout the TMC, the update to the Stormwater Management Manual which had been completed,

updates to the City of Tacoma Standard Drawings, and an update to the Design Manual which has not been updated since 2004 and has little information on LID.

Ms. Trohimovich noted that the project was a joint effort with Environmental Services, Public Works, Planning and Development Services, and the Standards Committee. Some examples of the changes being made by Environmental Services were discussed. Instead of using the word “impervious” in the code, the wording would be changed to “hard” per Ecology’s new definition, to include pervious surfacing. They will make changes to the code to allow pervious pavements where appropriate and will also be adding new chapters on landscaping and trails. Mr. Atkinson discussed some of contributions Planning and Development Services would be making including updating the design manual to incorporate Council policies like the Comprehensive Plan, Complete Streets and Greenroads. Mr. Parvey discussed the Public Works contribution including the Roadway Design chapter and rewriting the Traffic Signalization, Streetlighting, and Channelization/Pavement chapters.

Mr. Parvey reviewed the public outreach so far with the initial public meeting on April 10, 2014 and the most recent meeting on February 3, 2015. Future outreach would include a workshop in the spring, following completion of the draft. Additional outreach efforts would include targeted meetings with specific user groups such as the Master Builders Association.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions.

- Commissioner Erickson recommended contacting the AIA Southwest Washington for a targeted meeting as well.
- Chair Beale asked if the design manual is just for City Right of Way (ROW). Mr. Parvey responded that it was as it mostly affects city projects.
- Chair Beale asked if the LID code update would require pervious unless you can’t infiltrate. Ms. Trohimovich answered that the NPDES permit says to do it where feasible. She discussed feasibility criteria, like steep roads, bad soil, and places where pervious pavement might not be desired.
- Chair Beale asked if they were looking at the cross sections of roadways and planter strip widths. Ms. Trohimovich responded that there is no plan to make ROWs wider or change what is currently on the books for road widths. She added that what they have now is flexible enough to fit in LID.
- Chair Beale asked if they planned to standardize LEDs for street lights. Mr. Parvey responded that they won’t be retrofitting, but will use them for anything new.

2. Code and Plan Cleanup (Annual Amendment #2015-10)

Allison Barker and Dustin Lawrence, Planning Services Division, reviewed the scope of the proposed minor amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code and the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Barker noted that minor amendments were done yearly as part of an effort to update information, adjust inconsistencies, correct minor errors, and improve administrative efficiency. The following items from the table in the D-1 attachment were discussed:

(1) (13.02.041) Revise Quorum for Planning Commission

Chair Beale noted that the Commission was generally supportive of this change.

(2) (13.06.645) Consider allowing height variances outside of VSD and accessory buildings

Chair Beale requested more detail on how they would measure height. Mr. Lawrence responded that there were multiple methods: the current building code is an average, while in the View Sensitive Districts there is a formula for measuring height based on the existing grade. Commissioner Erickson expressed concern about the change being exploited to add additional occupied space, and how the existing grade would be determined. Commissioner Erickson also suggested that criteria for height variances would be needed. Commissioner Fields asked to clarify that new or existing construction would still need to obtain a variance to go higher with this

change. Mr. Lawrence confirmed that they would. Chair Beale commented that they would want to take a closer look at how the code is constructed.

(3) (13.06.510) Review Parking Code to correct inconsistencies

Chair Beale requested additional detail on the other minor issues to be addressed. Stephen Atkinson responded that it would include things that might be resolved through outreach like benchmarking for shared use parking, which has no code issues but has not been well utilized. Chair Beale suggested that as they consider parking issues they might investigate ways to reduce impervious surface.

(4) (13.06.502) Refine Landscaping Code

Commissioner Erickson asked to clarify that using a single calculation would not reduce the required landscape strip around the perimeter of a parking lot. Ms. Barker responded it was designed to make the calculation easier and should not result in any major changes.

(5) (13.06, 13.06A) Simplify Core and pedestrian streets

Mr. Atkinson discussed how the amendment would relate to the Mixed Use Centers review and would be partially a cleanup of terminology. Other issues to be addressed would include cases where the MUC boundary is not on both sides of the street, creating confusion on where the pedestrian boundary is. They would also compare design standards against use requirements and consider whether they want the same standard for the whole street. Commissioner Wamback commented on feedback received [from the community](#) during discussion of subarea plans [including concerns that designated “pedestrian streets” might not allow cars \(which is not the case\)](#) that demonstrated the need for simpler language to avoid confusion.

(6) (13.05.095) Revise the Development Regulation Agreement (DRA) section to have more general language because whatever is proposed will be negotiated.

Commissioner Fields asked why they were moving away from requiring L.E.E.D or equivalent level of certification. He commented that he would prefer not to remove the language as it would allow a more open interpretation of sustainability. Commissioner Peterson noted that L.E.E.D. is more geared towards new development and recommended the language be changed to “comparable”. Commissioner Fields supported changing the language to allow sustainability measures that would be equivalent to the L.E.E.D. gold level. Commissioner Wamback agreed with not removing the language entirely as a basic standard is needed. Commissioners requested to see the proposed language for the amendment at a future date.

(7) (13.06.522) Allow reasonably sized apartment signs in Residential districts

Commissioner Peterson requested specific details on what would constitute a reasonable sign as well as where a sign could be located and what the standards would be for design and lighting. Commissioner Neal requested additional information on what density would be needed to allow a sign, commenting that a triplex doesn't seem like something that should have its own sign. Chair Beale expressed concern about placement noting that there seems to be an allowance for tall signs very close to the right of way. Commissioner Wamback commented that subdivisions and PRDs might not be an appropriate justification. Commissioner Wamback also recommended including the criteria that there be an onsite office.

(8) (13.06.630) Have a clear “sunset clause” for discontinued CUPs

Mr. Lawrence commented that they need clarity because of frequent instances where in R2 districts you could historically get a conditional use permit for things like nursing homes, but can no longer do so. This creates issues with vacant properties, due to the language appearing to allow the conditional use indefinitely. Commissioners supported the concept and discussed the “sunset clause” used by different jurisdictions. Commissioner Wamback suggested a broader examination of discontinued uses, citing for example a chart in the Pierce County Development regulations that lists every type of allowed use and what happens when the use is vacated.

(9) (13.06.700.A) Remove the “within 6 feet is attached” rule

Ms. Barker commented the rule currently creates confusion with development standards. Mr. Lawrence added that situations like a garage or accessory structure being attached or detached

to the main dwelling is a daily issue for PDS and that staff wants a substantial connection like a shared wall or roof.

- (10) **(13.06 Land Use Tables) Clarify the “Master Plan” process for Conditional Uses**
Ms. Barker commented that the change was for clarity purposes only.
- (11) **(13.06.501, 13.06A.111) Review fence standards:**
Commissioner Erickson [noted the distinctions between typical fencing across different zones, from six foot wood fences in single family to concrete walls in mixed use, and](#) asked for clarification that they weren't trying to make everything the same [across different zones](#). Ms. Barker confirmed that they were not. Commissioner Neal asked if there was an allowance for properties at different heights. Mr. Lawrence responded that the zoning code has very little about fences currently. Ms. Barker commented that they could examine that further.
- (12) **(13.05.020) Change the CUP notification process to 400 feet across the board**
Ms. Barker commented that the change was intended to make the notification process more effective.
- (13) **(13.04.0909) Streamline the review process for short plats of 5-9 lots**
Mr. Lawrence commented on personally processing many of the plats and how the code change in recent years has resulted in a process that seemed like overkill for short plats. Commissioner Fields requested clarification on the phrase “more than necessary” in reference the number of signatures required. Mr. Lawrence responded that for 5-9 lot short plats, historically you would only need a small number of signatures, but after the definition of a subdivision was changed to include 5-9 lots the wording in the current code requires signatures from people including the City Clerk, Attorney, Engineer and the Mayor. Commissioner Erickson commented that the change would be consistent with the intent of the Planning Commission to keep it simple and treat it as a minor short plat.
- (14) **(13.06.501) Add additional options for awning regulations**
Commissioner Erickson asked if it would be possible to get the Fire Department to change their regulations to accommodate 5 feet. Commissioner Fields responded that it would be unlikely and provided clarification for the Fire Department's requirements.
- (15) **Review waiver processes through code**
Ms. Barker commented that they have not processed a waiver fee since 2001. Chair Beale requested additional information on what kind of fees are they referring to.
- (16) **Review procedure for minor adjustments in annexations**
Chair Beale asked if the amendment was related to the Point Ruston discussion. Mr. Atkinson responded that there are currently specific requirements for annexation, but there are also situations where there is a small parcel with a line down the middle and a willingness on both sides to address the issue. Commissioner Erickson asked if the procedure would still involve the Boundary Review Board or if they would be exempt based on size. Mr. Atkinson responded that it was yet to be determined. Chair Fields commented that it would be a good idea to have a clear definition for a small parcel. Commissioner Wambach noted that there is an existing State Law that addresses how to proceed when the boundary line goes through a single parcel and that any change would need to be consistent with the State law.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions on the smaller cleanup items:

- (19) **(13.05.095.D.4) Add that the City is the lead agency for SEPA's under the DRA process**
Commissioner Erickson asked if this would still allow the City to delegate it's authority to another jurisdiction as they did to Pierce County on the new administration building. Chair Beale also asked for clarification on whether they were okay with pre-exempting the ability for another public agency to request lead status.
- (21) **(13.06.645) Change the language for level 1 wireless facility in 13.06.545 to more closely resemble SEPA language of WAC 197-11-800**

Chair Beale asked if they were dealing with Section 6409(a) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act which concerned colocations and height extensions. Mr. Lawrence responded that it hadn't been an issue to his knowledge.

(23) (13.06.602.A) Clarify if athletic field regulations for parks are also meant to be applied to school athletic fields. Potentially move 13.06.602A.4.p to parks section (13.06.560).

Commissioner Fields asked for information on the current regulations and how they would be applied to schools. Ms. Barker responded that it pertained to the general restriction section, but she would have to check for the details. Mr. Lawrence commented that it might concern conditional use aspects.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, thanked the Commissioners for their feedback on the code cleanup issues and noted that the same package of information had been presented to the Master Builders Association (MBA).

Mr. Wung reported that the City Council had adopted the ordinance on February 17th concerning permanent regulations for recreational marijuana based on the Commission's recommendations, and that one of the recitals of the ordinance would require a joint meeting of the Council and Planning Commission to address modifications to the regulations should the State regulations change.

Mr. Wung noted that the possible agenda items for the March 4th Planning Commission meeting would include the 2015 GMA update, Affordable Housing, and Open Space.

Steve Atkinson, Planning Services Division, reported that the City Council had adopted the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan and Vision. For the next steps, a project manager was being recruited and an implementation committee was being formed. Data and accountability measures were being developed to create consistency throughout the different efforts across the city. Mr. Atkinson discussed some of the specific items from the 2025 Strategic Plan and Vision and how they would align with the activities of the Planning Commission, noting that integrating it would be an ongoing process.

Commissioner Wambach commented on the final report of the Billboards Community Working Group. The Co-Chairs, staff, and the working group facilitator would be presenting the report to the City Council study session on March 3rd. Should the City Council choose to send the item on to the Planning Commission, Commissioner Wambach recommended structuring the first meeting similar to the Transportation Master Plan discussion by inviting the Co-Chairs and work group members who authored minority statements.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

At 5:51 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.