



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION AUGUST 27, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair - Josh Brower, Vice-Chair Leslie Miller, Linda Amato, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Christopher Persons, Matt Roewe, Michelle Zeidman

### COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer, Michael Pickford-intern

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, Mark Johnson, Marty Kaplan, Kay Knapton

### IN ATTENDANCE

Eric Nusbaum, Northwest HUB

*Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.*

### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Josh Brower called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

### COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

**ACTION: Commissioner Kevin McDonald moved to approve the August 13, 2009 minutes. Commissioner Jerry Finrow seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.**

- **Chair's Report** - Commission Chair Josh Brower

Chair Brower reviewed the upcoming meetings: the Executive Committee will meet on September 1 and discuss priorities for the rest of the year; the HNUC Committee will meet on September 9 (rescheduled from September 8 because of the Labor Day holiday) and continue working on the Multifamily Code update; the next Full Commission meeting will be on Thursday, September 10.

## ACTION

### ▪ **Approve: Backyard Cottage Recommendations**

#### **Recusals & Disclosures:**

- Chair Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, represents clients who might build backyard cottages sometime in the future.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that he has a backyard cottage that was built prior to current zoning regulations.

Chair Brower described a recent tour of backyard cottages that he and Director Barbara Wilson attended along with Councilmembers and staff. He noted that he thought all the examples were great. He suggested that the Commission could provide Council with helpful insight about the policy implications of the proposed legislation to allow backyard cottages citywide.

Ms. Wilson explained the Commission's long involvement in supporting backyard cottages throughout the city and noting the Commission's position that they provide one important option for housing. She reviewed the work of the Executive and HUNC committees and the draft letter. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commissioners Committee discussions focused on all of the great benefits of this housing type. She also reported that both the Executive Committee and the HNUC raised objections to the limit of 50 permits for backyard cottages per year in the proposed legislation. In addition, they recommended that the Commission oppose any reduction to the proposed 800 square foot size limit on cottages that Council may consider.

Vice Chair Miller said that DPD's presentation at the August 18 Executive Committee meeting was very convincing. She suggested that adding some of the words and reactions from the poll conducted in neighborhoods where backyard cottages have been built might be convincing to support the Commission's recommendations. She noted that there has not been a negative impact on the neighborhoods that critics feared.

Commissioner McDonald asked if there were any comments about recently constructed backyard cottages at the recent status report open house meetings. Vice Chair Miller said that it was not brought up at the Columbia City, nor has it been mentioned in the meetings at Othello. Ms. Wilson noted that she recently attended a Southeast District Council meeting to distribute the Commission's backyard cottage guidebook and that no one had negative comments. Commissioner Finrow indicated that some people who attended the open house meeting from Morgan Junction had negative comments about the proposed legislation but noted that backyard cottages are not currently allowed in that area. He agreed that it would be useful to indicate that the Commission has not heard opposition to backyard cottages in areas **where they are allowed** but not to say that there has not be **any** opposition.

Commissioner Persons suggested that if we had to trade off something it would be more important for Council to keep the size limit at 800 square feet than to remove the 50 permit cap. Commissioner Finrow agreed and noted that anything less than 800 square feet would make it very hard for more than one person to live in the home. He noted this is especially important to provide more housing choices for single parent households as well as couples.

Commissioner Roewe stated that the cottage in his backyard was built in 1905. He noted that it is 450 square feet and that he has had a variety of individuals as tenants who otherwise would not have had the ability to live in his neighborhood. He indicated that no one in his neighborhood has ever complained. He also noted that in the future it would be worth further exploring the parking requirement in Urban Centers and Villages.

Ms. Wilson said that there will be a public hearing about the proposed legislation on September 15 and asked Commissioners to confirm with her if they would like to testify. She noted that she would send out the details about the date and time of the hearing.

**ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the letter as amended. Commissioner Chris Persons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

▪ **Discussion: Neighborhood Planning & Status Reports**

- Commission report on neighborhood breakout summaries
- Commission report on virtual meeting & results from the on-line questionnaire
- Commission's findings and recommendations

**Recusals & Disclosures:**

There were no recusals or disclosures.

Ms. Wilson said that roughly 350-375 people attend the public meetings for the status reports. She noted that turnout increased with the later meetings. She indicated that the on-line meeting far exceeded expectations with over 4,500 responses. She noted that staff is working to pull together reports from the meetings and on-line questionnaire and that everything will be made available to the public on-line and on CD. Ms. Wilson then walked through the draft report for the public meetings/ neighborhood breakout sessions. Ms. Sheehy summarized the report for the on-line questionnaire responses that she prepared. Commissioner Amato thanked staff for helping to make the meetings a success.

Chair Brower asked Commissioner to discuss their findings and recommendations about the process. He noted that the Commission is required to provide a summary report of the public meetings and that the on-line questionnaire report is an added bonus and suggested that it would be useful to provide an executive summary that summarizes the two reports. Chair Brower said that the second round of open house meetings is being discussed. He indicated that NPAC recently submitted a letter to City Council urging them to continue to fund the update process.

Vice Chair Miller said that she heard two very clear themes at the public meetings: (1) Checking-in every 10 years is not enough and that people want to interact with the city in a more on-going way. (2) City departments do not coordinate well. She suggested that the Commission could create an integrated way to connect people with the City in a meaningful dialogue. She asked how the Commission could foster a productive relationship between the City and its citizens.

Commissioner Leighton asked that Commissioners continue to share our information and findings with NPAC.

Commissioners discussed various options for holding the second round of meetings and how the draft status reports would be finalized. Ms. Wilson reminded the Commission that Commission staff would not be able to provide the same level of support and still accomplish other work plan goals. She noted that City staff has suggested that two meetings be held in October that would provide an opportunity for people to review the final status reports and connect with City departments that could help them resolve issues beyond the scope of neighborhood plans.

Vice Chair Miller suggested that the established District Council meetings that will occur the autumn would also be an excellent opportunity to report back to the neighborhoods with the final status reports. Commissioner Leighton noted that the Pedestrian Master Plan team used the District Council meetings to inform people and that it worked very well. Commissioner Persons agreed that using the District Council meetings could be a useful way to report back to the neighborhoods.

Commissioner Finrow asked about Council's expectations for the Commission's recommendations. Ms. Wilson replied that Councilmember Clark had specifically asked for the Commission's comments; Ms. Wilson asked Councilmember Clark to provide a more specifics about what advice she'd like from the Commission. She noted that the Commission has a long history as stewards of the Comprehensive Plan and has been actively involved in neighborhood planning.

Commissioners briefly discussed findings from some of the neighborhoods about whether or not their priorities have changed since the neighborhood plans were adopted. It was noted that not all neighborhoods are likely to request updates to their plans.

Chair Brower closed the discussion by noting that they will continue to work on this and identify recommendations about how best to move forward.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Josh Brower adjourned the meeting at 9:04 a.m.