



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION JANUARY 28, 2010 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Josh Brower, Chair; David Cutler; Jerry Finrow; Chris Fiori; Colie Hough-Beck; Mark Johnson; Marty Kaplan; Kay Knapton; Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald; Christopher Persons; Matt Roewe; Amanda Sparr

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson, Director; Katie Sheehy, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri, Demographer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Linda Amato; Catherine Benotto; Leslie Miller

GUESTS

Council President Richard Conlin

IN ATTENDANCE

Dennis Saxman; Bill Bradburd; Wilson Cancino; Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff

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

Since the Chair and Vice Chair were not present at the start of the meeting, Commissioner McDonald agreed to be the Acting Chair. Acting Chair Kevin McDonald called the meeting to order at 7:31 am.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Minutes approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the January 14, 2010 minutes; Commissioner Mark Johnson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Acting Chair Kevin McDonald reviewed the upcoming meetings: the Executive Committee will meet next on Tuesday, February 1; the HNUC Committee will meet next on Tuesday, February 9; the Full Commission will meet next on Thursday, February 11. Acting Chair McDonald noted that public comments might be taken a few minutes late in order to accommodate Council President Conlin.

Ms. Wilson noted that Chair Brower facilitated a meeting about the South Lake Union urban design framework this past Tuesday and that Ms. Sheehy provided additional staff support at the meeting. Ms. Wilson asked that the Commission entertain a change in the agenda to defer discussion about the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments in order to accommodate Council President Conlin. The Commission agreed to the change in agenda.

At 7:40a.m. Chair Brower arrived and assumed the chairing of the meeting.

APPROVAL, DISCUSSION & BRIEFING

APPROVE: SPC Recommendations on Future Neighborhood Plan Updates

Recusals & Disclosures:

- Commissioner Catherine Benotto disclosed that a member of her firm, Weber Thompson, serves in a volunteer position on the SLUFAN committee.
- Commissioner Mark Johnson disclosed that his firm, ESA Adolfson, does consulting work on neighborhood planning.
- Commissioner Chris Persons disclosed that his firm, Capitol Hill Housing, develops projects within neighborhood plan boundaries and that one of his staff members has been very involved with NPAC.
- Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, works on projects within neighborhood planning boundaries.
- Commissioner Kay Knapton disclosed that she was one of the Commission's representatives on NPAC.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that she was one of the Commission's representatives on NPAC and served as the co-chair of NPAC from August 2009 through January 2010.
- Chair Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, sometimes work with clients to rezone property; he also disclosed that he was the co-chair of NPAC from December 2008 through August 2009.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that he is a member of the land use committee for the Queen Anne Community Council.
- Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, is working on the Mount Baker Neighborhood Plan update.

Chair Brower reminded Commissioners of the Neighborhood Plan Status Check of the past year and offered a few minutes for everyone to read the draft letter of findings and recommendations for future of the 24 neighborhood plan updates. Ms. Wilson noted that the draft letter was discussed in committee and that it still needed a lot more vetting by the full Commission. She noted that the intent is to provide the Executive and Council with the Commission's findings and recommendations about how to move forward with the 24 neighborhood plans that we spent the last year assessing.

Commissioner Leighton stated that NPAC had its final meeting early in the month and that she is meeting with Irene Wall, the other NPAC co-chair, and the facilitator to debrief from the last meeting. NPAC will provide its own recommendations this week as was outlined in the council resolution [Please see the [NPAC website](#) for more information.]

Commissioner Knapton noted that the Planning Commission has a very different role and should look through a different lens than NPAC in making the Commission recommendations on this matter. Many of the members of NPAC are there to represent the interests and needs of their individual neighborhoods. The Commission should focus on working toward a viable update process for all neighborhood plans and take a citywide perspective on these matters.

Chair Brower noted that there needs to be more clear direction from the City and more consistency about how neighborhood plans are implemented, particularly during such challenging economic times. He suggested that budget allocation for neighborhood planning is a key consideration. Ms. Wilson noted that the draft letter supports the urban village strategy and encourages a more strategic use of funds to implement plans.

Commissioner Kaplan suggested that the Commission should really rethink and revise the current neighborhood planning process and advocate for a citywide strategic plan for the future. He said that there is no overarching commitment toward the future of the city and noted that Seattle is growing faster than many cities across the country. Ms. Wilson asked him to think about how what he is suggesting diverges from or enhances the comprehensive strategic citywide vision of the future outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Johnson said that the initial planning process was developed as a way for neighborhoods to plan how to accommodate anticipated growth. He suggested that looking at the neighborhoods where growth has not been well aligned with the plan would be one way to identify the next plans to be updated.

Chair Brower suggested that wide-spread civic engagement should be an essential goal moving forward. He expressed support for building on the new outreach methods used last year – the Planning Outreach Liaisons and virtual online meeting – as a way to allow more people to participate in the planning process.

Commissioner Leighton expressed strong support for Commissioner Kaplan's comments and suggested that the upcoming 2011 Comprehensive Plan update would be a good way to address the citywide vision balanced by the neighborhood plans. She also said that the City should clarify how projects are prioritized as a way to illustrate commitment to priorities identified in the plans.

Commissioner Finrow suggested that the letter be shortened to prioritize three categories of neighborhood plan updates. He said the question of how to allocate resources is a different issue all together.

Commissioner McDonald noted that participants in the Status Check outreach were focused on the vision for their neighborhood. He suggested that it would be more useful for plans to provide guidance about investment within the neighborhoods rather than a checklist of specific projects.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked if the letter of recommendations should also identify the Commission's role in neighborhood plan updates moving forward.

Commissioner Persons concurred with much of what was previously stated and reiterated the need for a long-term, long-range, citywide perspective that would help minimize missed opportunities. He pointed out that we should welcome and encourage communities and individual neighborhoods to articulate and advocate for their needs. Conversely, he noted that some communities have greater challenges in advocating for their priorities to be addressed so that it is important to provide overarching guidance as a counterbalance.

Commissioner Cutler said that the Commission should not shy away from articulating how the neighborhood plans should relate to each other from a citywide perspective but noted that City Council has the final authority in advancing a vision for the city.

Commissioner Fiori said that, to some degree, transportation and land use strategies should be determined by the City rather than individual neighborhood groups. He suggested that neighborhood plans focus on more localized issues like community safety and small capital improvements that could be updated on an on-going or annual basis.

Commissioner Roewe expressed disappointment that only two neighborhood plans would be updated during 2010.

Ms. Wilson said that the SPC finding and recommendations will continue to be discussed and that a new draft will be sent out for review online.

BRIEFING: City Council 2010 Priorities

- City Council President Richard Conlin

Chair Brower thanked City Council President Conlin for taking the time to speak to the Commission.

City Council President Conlin began by stating that the country is undergoing a very challenging economic situation that will likely result in a different economy. He suggested that many systems are being reoriented around technology and that, as a city, we need to have a lot of flexibility about how we think about the future. Conlin said that people are very likely to continue migrating to the Pacific Northwest and that the high growth rates of the southwest are likely to be unsustainable in the face of global climate change. He offered two ways he hopes to help position Seattle to take advantage of these changes:

- (1) Increase the supply of housing, particularly affordable housing.
- (2) Support the development of green technology companies.

Council President Conlin indicated that Council is still determining this year's priorities, which will likely include supporting economic recovery and promoting smarter building design and neighborhood sustainability. He noted that an increasing focus for Council relates to creating stronger regional partnerships. One example would be to create a regional strategy for urban centers that identifies common problems and solutions. Conlin cited the local food action initiative as another strategy that

could be implemented statewide. He indicated that other priorities will include investment and partnership with Seattle's schools, public safety and transportation.

Council President Conlin also mentioned the [Open Space 2100](#) forum that envisioned what our region might look like in 100 years. He suggested that the Duwamish could become the city's new front yard with a new kind of urban form that integrates industry and business in an ecologically healthy and sustainable manner.

Commissioner Finrow thanked Council President Conlin for coming to the meeting. He asked how we could think differently about industry. Council President Conlin replied that we're caught in a dichotomy of either preserving it exactly as it is now or getting rid of it all together but that in the future these two concepts will not be mutually exclusive. He noted that the new model of industrial production is very different from the smokestacks of the past and could be compatible with other commercial uses and potentially even residential development.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if the annexation of White Center would be conditioned on upzones. Council President Conlin replied that he did not think it would but that there are other interesting possibilities. He noted that the basic question is whether or not the City has the financial wherewithal to support the annexation.

Commissioner Persons asked about the priorities for the Office of Economic Development (OED). Council President Conlin replied that OED has been going through a two year evaluation process. He noted two points: (1) OED can be more strategic about fostering growth of existing businesses and helping local businesses get started rather than attracting businesses from other places. (2) Business support services (helping with permits, creating incentives, etc.) could be improved to really facilitate and assist business development. Chair Brower asked if there is an interdisciplinary team to help businesses through permitting processes. Conlin replied that it is a great suggestion. Commissioner Knapton suggested looking at some of the negative fees assessed against businesses, such as issuance of permits for signs. She noted that while the individual fees are minimal, the process can be very cumbersome and it could be beneficial to consolidate the process. Conlin replied that that is one of the reasons Council repealed the 'head tax' because it does not make sense to have three different B&O taxes.

Commissioner Roewe said he really supports thinking regionally but noted that such things are often beyond the city's purview and asked how Council can push the agenda forward. Council President replied that building personal relationships and connections will be essential and help identify common interests.

Chair Brower thanked Council President Conlin again for taking the time to share his thoughts about the upcoming year with the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Brower noted that the Commission would now take public comment. The Commission provides for public comment at all meetings but does not hold public hearings since the Commission is an advisory body that provide recommendations to elected leaders that in turn make the actual decisions. Chair Brower provided this information as a reminder that individuals who make comments to the

Commission should remember that the Mayor and City Council make the decisions and those individuals should remember to provide their comments appropriately to elected officials.

Dennis Saxman began by admonishing the Commission for limiting the public to two minutes of comments while allowing themselves relatively unlimited time to voice their concerns. He also stated that not all white men are privileged. He said that as a person with HIV AIDS who grew up in western Pennsylvania and that he is not privileged. He noted that most of the Commissioners are white men and that the criticism applied by the Commission to neighborhood planning could apply to many city offices and the Commission itself. He stated that he was not self-appointed to NPAC, but was appointed by the District Council. Mr. Saxman warned that the Commission choose their words wisely and talk with their council about libel implications of their letter. He suggested that the Commission's letter would ignite a political firestorm within the neighborhoods. He urged the Commission to think of all the great plans that were utter failures and think seriously about the concept of civic engagement in order to make the letter more balanced. Mr. Saxman indicated that he would like to submit a letter to the Commission regarding NPAC and the growth machine that took control of the process in defiance of the letter and the spirit of the ordinance.

Bill Bradburd began by stating that he has been following the neighborhood planning process closely; he lives in the Central District and has been involved with the stewardship of the neighborhood plan. He said that he disagrees with some of the characterizations in the Commission's draft letter. He identified himself as a white male who has been engaged in the planning process within his neighborhood, which is approximately 30 percent white; he disagreed with the characterization of the neighborhood process as not representing a broad demographic of the population. He reiterated his opinion that DPD dominated the process and said that while the public outreach liaisons were a good idea, it was wrong to only work with minority groups. He indicated that people who have lived in the neighborhoods a long time were very frustrated with the process because it was controlled by the City. Mr. Bradburd said that the Commission's draft letter does not really reflect what happened. He indicated that he would be pleased to send his comments to the Commission. Mr. Bradburd also said that Council President Conlin has some very good ideas about the big picture but noted that he neglected to mention local transit and how neighborhoods are interconnected. He said that there are some big picture issues, such as form based zoning, that the City should think about. He also suggested that Seattle should have its own bicycling manufacturing business.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Josh Brower adjourned at 9:14 am.