



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION MARCH 27, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### **Commissioners in Attendance**

Tony To - Chair; Linda Amato, Josh Brower, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Michelle Mattox, Leslie Miller

### **Commission Staff**

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist

### **Commissioners Absent**

Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Chelsea Levy, Kevin McDonald, Kirsten Pennington

### **Guests**

Lucia Athens, Steve Moddemeyer, Department of Planning and Development

### **In Attendance**

Anthony Russo

*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**

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 am.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

- Minutes Approval

**ACTION:** Commissioner Linda Amato moved to approve the March 13, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Martin Kaplan seconded the motion. Commissioner Kaplan suggested some minor changes to the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

- Chairs Report

Chair Tony To reported that the Commission recently posted the job announcement for the demographer position. He stated the position represents a very exciting opportunity for the Commission to create a lot of value for the city and that the Commission placed a link to the posting on its website. Chair To added that the opening will remain listed for about four weeks and that once it closes, there will be a panel to review the submitted resumes that will include City Council, City Departments and the Commission.

Chair To noted the upcoming meetings and events.

- **SPC Practices Regarding Draft Documents**
  - Discussion and Possible Vote

Chair To stated that the Commission has had some concerns expressed recently about its policy regarding draft documents. He noted that, as of now, the Commission provides drafts of documents to those in attendance at the Full Commission meeting where they are being reviewed. Chair To stated that there has been a request that drafts of these documents are provided to interested parties earlier. Chair To offered two potential solutions to this issue.

Chair To noted that the first proposal would be to continue the current practice of mailing out the draft agenda and placing it on the website for Full Commission meetings one week prior to the meeting. He added that citizens that wish to obtain any materials that will be discussed at the meeting can call or e-mail staff and they will provide it to them when they become available.

Chair To stated that the second proposal would be to post drafts of related materials, including draft letters, on the website one week prior to the Full Commission meeting.

Commissioner Linda Amato noted her concern that often documents aren't ready until the day before the meeting and people might come in to the meeting to discuss a document that has changed a great deal since it was posted to the website a week prior.

Chair To suggested that a disclaimer could be provided notifying people that changes could occur.

Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck asked if the City Council had an overall policy on this issue, or if other Boards and Commissions had a policy. Ms. Wilson stated that the Council does not post draft documents and that she was unaware of what other Boards and Commissions do.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan suggested posting the documents online for an introductory period of 6 months to determine if there were any potential complications that might result from the policy.

Commissioner Chris Fiori stated that rather than all draft documents being posted, instead discern between draft documents on which there could be an action on at the upcoming meeting, and those documents being worked on continuously for long periods of time.

Commissioner Josh Brower stated that he believes strongly in open disclosure and transparency, but also wants to ensure the public has a document that accurately reflects what the Commission will be discussing. He suggested posting draft documents online but closer to the time of the Full Commission meeting.

Commissioner Leslie Miller stated that there would likely exist room for misinformation to be distributed if a document is released too early. She stated one of the primary goals of posting the document is to allow people to review the documents without having to wait until the meeting, so releasing the documents closer to the meeting time seemed to make sense.

**ACTION: Commissioner Mark Johnson moved to modify the current practice and post the agenda and the draft documents for the Full Commission meetings on the website. Commissioner Chris Fiori seconded the motion. Commissioner Mark Johnson offered a friendly amendment to post the draft documents by close of business the Tuesday or Wednesday before the Full Commission meeting. Commissioners Johnson and Fiori accepted the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.**

## **COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

- **Presentation: Seattle's Vision for Sustainability (Part 2)**  
- Steve Moddemeyer & Lucia Athens, Department of Planning and Development

Chair To welcomed Lucia Athens and Steve Moddemeyer. He stated that Lucia is the director of the Department of Planning and Development's Green Building team, while Steve is a strategic advisor at DPD who is working on a variety of interesting projects, many involving the city's development of infrastructure. Chair To noted that their presentations are part two of a two part series on Seattle's Vision for Sustainability. He added that last week the Commission heard from Steve Nicholas, Office of Sustainability and the Environment, regarding the City's broad-based efforts to address climate change. Chair To reported that Lucia and Steve will tell the Commission about some of the more specific efforts underway, particularly regarding Green Building and Green Infrastructure.

**Lucia Athens presented a power point presentation. The presentation is attached.**

Ms. Athens stated that sustainability seems to be more recognized by the general populace than three years ago. She added that concern remains about green washing and believing that we can buy our way out of the problem. Ms. Athens noted that Seattle has the most LEED-certified projects in the U.S., though it is getting increasingly competitive. She stated that much of her program is focused on technical assistance with green development projects. Ms. Athens noted that there are various levels of service, the greatest being to help walk a project all the way through the development process. She added that the Green Building department receives funding from a variety of sources, including DPD, the Utilities, and the general fund. Ms. Athens continued that they are held accountable to a steering committee consisting of a variety of departmental representatives.

Ms. Athens stated that it is sometimes difficult to prioritize their efforts and that they have reduced their technical service to single family development and focused more on high impact projects. She added that they are exploring some development guidelines that go beyond LEED, including living building and restorative design and that they are integrating green principles into the codes and creating incentives for building green, as well as removing barriers to building green. Ms. Athens continued that they are also working on creating an integrated permit review team.

Ms. Athens noted they are currently thinking about how to make all buildings carbon neutral by 2030 and that they are exploring energy code changes and mandatory energy audits. She added that lately they have been focusing on making historic buildings more energy efficient, either through offsets or other initiatives. She noted that in South Lake Union, they are developing a LEED for neighborhood development pilot program. Ms. Athens noted that in addition, they hope the upcoming neighborhood planning effort can incorporate green building concepts.

Steve Moddemeyer introduced himself and stated that he works primarily on green infrastructure. He noted that Seattle owns one-third of the city, but does not manage it as well as it could. Mr. Moddemeyer noted that the city currently manages this area by line of business and has not had an integrated vision. He noted that to create a good human habitat, management must think holistically, and it has not.

Mr. Moddemeyer said that, to solve this problem, he decided to follow the money. He noted that the Department of Finance gets hundreds of requests for funds every budget year, which it then turns into the capital budget. Mr. Moddemeyer noted that he worked with the Director of Finance to help departments collaborate before submitting their budget requests. He added that the Director of Finance decided to engage in this approach with some pilot projects and these coordinated capital planning efforts include Seattle Center, where the city is working to take the water that goes there and find a better use for it than treating it in a sewage treatment plant. Mr. Moddemeyer noted that another project is to develop a way to lessen the amount of pollutants being released near downtown by idling ships. He added that one way would be to put electric plugs near where the ships dock so they can use electricity for power rather than gasoline. Mr. Moddemeyer continued that another issue he is currently working on is sidewalks, an area that so many departments have purview over; the process for dealing with them is currently very difficult.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked if the city has considered implementing a more coordinated effort when it works on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the near future. Mr. Moddemeyer replied that his efforts have focused on projects 3-6 years out, because anything sooner has already been so significantly planned, it would be difficult to restart the planning effort.

Commissioner Johnson wondered if the city looks at the percentage of green buildings in the city as a metric for how successfully it is promoting green building. Ms. Athens responded that they are currently not, but instead focus on the percentage of new permits that involve green buildings.

Commissioner Brower questioned if there were any incentives for developers to encourage building green. Ms. Athens answered that there was currently a cash incentive and that the integrated review team would also provide a big incentive for going green. She added that there are many municipalities that now mandate green building.

Commissioner Fiori asked if the discrepancy found in communities between wanting more green building and also wanting more parking has been explored by the Green Building department. Ms. Athens stated that their priorities have not often involved parking regulations. Commissioner Fiori suggested that the department perform more outreach involving the benefits of reduced parking requirements.

Commissioner Kaplan suggested that many developers and residents are not aware of the City's green building efforts and all the benefits associated with building green. He suggested a more grassroots

approach to the issue, i.e. creating demand among residents for greener infrastructure and building rather than a top-down approach, could have greater impacts on stopping climate change.

Chair To suggested Bellevue's Bel-Red corridor work as an example of creating a green zoning pattern, by allowing high density development near transit stations. He stated these sorts of density issues should be integrated into any green-oriented city effort. Mr. Moddemeyer noted that density is important, but so is the urban infrastructure and urban habitat that goes along with the density. He added that the city needs to work more on how to address this.

Chair To stated that the discussion regarding the Evans School Forum on neighborhood planning would be postponed to a later meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chair To adjourned the meeting at 9:04 am.