



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Tim Parham, Chair

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 25, 2018

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Veronica Guenther, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Eileen Canola, Sandra Fried, Kelly Rider

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Nathan Torgelson, Director, Department of Construction and Inspections; Ketil Freeman, Seattle City Council Central Staff; Michael Hubner, Office of Planning and Community Development

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Tim Parham called the meeting to order at 7:34 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the October 11, 2018 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed. Commissioner Marj Press abstained.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events.

Update: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Nathan Torgelson, Director, Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)

Director Torgelson provided brief updates on several major projects currently being reviewed by his department. The Seattle Center Arena Final Environmental Impact Statement was not appealed, and the project is moving forward. SDCI and Seattle Center are developing a sign overlay ordinance for the arena that may be eventually applied to the whole Seattle Center campus for better wayfinding. SDCI will be issuing a major public project construction noise variance decision soon for the arena redevelopment project which will allow construction activity at higher noise levels. This type of noise variance is common for large public projects. SDCI has begun reviewing the building permit for arena excavation and is waiting for the structural permit application, which will be subject to peer review. It was announced recently that the NHL Seattle hockey team will build their training facility as part of Simon Properties' proposed Northgate redevelopment. The proposed facility will have three ice rinks and will provide significant public access benefits. Simon has also proposed to construct more than 1,000 new housing units at Northgate.

SDCI recently issued a permit for a high-rise development in the University District. The building will provide 24 stories of student housing and will contribute \$3.5 million to the Mandatory Housing Affordability program.

Improvements to the new Accela permit tracking system are being completed. SDCI has activated an Accela Customer Experience team to help applicants. The Land Use Information Bulletin has been improved. SDCI is offering training sessions for applicants. Department staff has been meeting with the Master Builders, American Institute of Architects, NAIOP - the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, and the Downtown Seattle Association to discuss improvements to the permitting process. SDCI is also implementing a pilot project using Blue Beam software to improve processing times for permit applications. Mr. Torgelson stated that intake levels for permit applications are roughly consistent with that of 2017. Permit issuance levels are slightly lower than 2017.

SDCI is working with City Councilmember Johnson on proposed tree legislation that he is sponsoring. The department is also working on legislation related to electric vehicle readiness. The proposed 2019 Mayor's budget for SDCI is different than many other departments because their work is 92% fee based. The department will be hiring staff dedicated to process and system improvements. Resources will be re-allocated within the department for new hires, including a new geotechnical engineer and reviewers for tree permits. SDCI will be making changes to its land use fees to keep up with inflation. Department staff continue outreach on tenant protection legislation, including working with immigrant and refugee communities as well as landlords. The department will hold home fairs in January/February.

Dick Alford, manager of SDCI's Inspection Services division, recently retired. Jon Siu, SDCI's Building Official, recently celebrated 35 years of service with the City and received a prestigious award from a national building officials' organization.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for more information on the electric vehicle readiness legislation. Mr. Torgelson stated that the focus is currently on multi-family buildings, but this may extend to commercial buildings in the future.
- Commissioners asked whether SDCl is involved with the Request for Proposals (RFP) for affordable housing at Northgate. Mr. Torgelson stated that the RFP is for property owned by King County. SDCl is not involved but Gordon Clowers is tracking the project. The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) is very involved.
- Commissioners asked about the likelihood of Simon Properties' plans for 1,000 housing units in the Northgate redevelopment to be built. Mr. Torgelson stated that those plans are very likely to materialize.
- Commissioners asked for more information about the proposed hockey facility at Northgate. Mr. Torgelson stated that the NHL Seattle team is very interested in providing public benefits, especially given the dearth of ice rinks in the region.
- Commissioners asked whether the new proposed land use signs offer translation in multiple languages. Mr. Torgelson answered that the department did research the potential for using QR codes, but that method had some complications. He stated they will pursue this and noted that the new design review process includes rigorous outreach including translation in different languages.

Briefing: 2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Ketil Freeman, Seattle City Council Central Staff

Michael Hubner, Office of Planning and Community Development

If you would like to view the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendments presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Executive Director Murdock reminded the Commissioners of the process to review Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Comprehensive Plan can only be amended once per year. As opposed to the process for docketing proposed amendments, which is based on specific criteria, the Planning Commission recommends approval of these amendments based on their merits. The Commission will take action on recommendations regarding these amendments at the November 8th meeting.

DISCLOSURES: Commissioner Michael Austin disclosed that he works for Perkins + Will. As such he is working as a consultant to Seattle Pacific University on their campus planning project.

Mr. Freeman introduced a proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment related to transportation impact fees. He reviewed the legislative history of impact fees in Seattle and the requirements for establishing impact fees. He highlighted the types of transportation projects that would be funded by impact fees, including projects on the current Capital Improvement Projects list, projects that would implement the modal plans, and Move Seattle Vision projects. Mr. Freeman introduced the project list for all three types of projects and described the next steps for impact fee legislation. A Comprehensive Plan Amendment is a necessary step but does not set up an impact fee program. Potential Council action to implement a program is likely by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

Commissioners asked whether the list of projects to be funded by impact fees would be in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Freeman replied that the list of projects would go in an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan and some transportation policies in the Plan would be amended. Commissioners asked how the impact fee revenues would be allocated. Mr. Freeman stated that the ultimate decision would depend on the development cycle. A Comprehensive Plan Amendment would adopt the proposed project list but would not prioritize or guarantee funding for those projects. Modifications to the project list could be made by future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Hubner introduced two additional proposed amendments recommended for adoption in 2018. The first would amend Land Use Goal 6 to state that increasing affordable housing is a goal in setting parking requirements, rather than lowering construction costs as currently stated. OPCD has recommended adopting the revised language but maintaining the original text and adding language from the applicant's suggestion to make the goal clearer.

The second proposed amendment would amend the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) by removing 4.7 acres from the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Center (BINMIC). The applicant is Seattle Pacific University (SPU), which hopes to include industrial properties that they have acquired adjacent to and north of its campus in their upcoming Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) process. This proposed amendment is one of several FLUM amendments that were docketed for further analysis in 2017. SPU is initiating the process to update their MIMP that considers future land uses and development standards and includes environmental review and public involvement processes. The University has done extensive outreach to surrounding landowners. Mr. Hubner showed the proposed FLUM amendment location on a map and stated that OPCD is only recommending a FLUM change at this time without any policy changes in the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioners asked for more information about how the Comprehensive Plan Amendment would affect existing and future land use. Mr. Hubner stated that the proposed amendment would allow SPU to go through the MIMP process and to develop new construction in the area to the north of its campus. The existing buildings in that area are older warehouses. Commissioners asked how many businesses would be impacted by this amendment. Mr. Hubner replied that he did not know the specifics, but his general understanding is that the area contains mostly warehouses.

Chair Parham facilitated discussion of each of the proposed amendments. He asked the Commissioners if they recommend approval of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment related to transportation impact fees. The Commissioners recommended approval of this amendment with the suggestion that replacement of the 4th Avenue S viaduct be added to the project list.

Chair Parham asked the Commissioners if they recommend approval of the proposed amendment that would revise Land Use Goal 6 to state that increasing affordable housing is a goal in setting parking requirements, rather than lowering construction costs as currently stated. The original text of the revised goal as proposed by the applicant is as follows:

LU G6: Regulate off-street parking to address parking demand in ways that reduce reliance on automobiles, improve public health and safety, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower construction costs increase affordable housing, create attractive and walkable environments, and promote economic development throughout the city.

The Commissioners endorsed OPCD's suggested language as shown below:

LU G6: Regulate off-street parking to address parking demand in ways that reduce reliance on automobiles, improve public health and safety, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower construction costs to reduce the cost of and increase affordable housing, create attractive and walkable environments, and promote economic development throughout the city.

The Commissioners recommended approval of the proposed amendment as revised.

Chair Parham asked the Commissioners if they recommend approval of the proposed amendment that would revise the FLUM by removing 4.7 acres from the BINMIC. A summary of the Commission's comments is below:

- Commissioners stated that the Planning Commission has historically not approved this type of FLUM change in the absence of a broader industrial lands policy or study. Removing industrial lands from a Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC) creates cumulative impacts on jobs and the economy.
- Commissioners agreed that SPU's situation is unique because it is not a private property owner but this FLUM change could be perceived as setting a precedent for removing industrial lands from a MIC. Once industrial land is changed to another use, it will most likely never be returned to industrial use.
- Commissioners acknowledged that SPU has heard the Queen Anne community's concerns about expansion of the university campus to the south. Commissioners noted that the population is growing and the demand for higher education is increasing. Some university uses could be expanded to the south, but steeper topography to the south would make development of other university facilities more difficult.
- Commissioners expressed frustration with the lack of policy direction from the City on industrial lands. The Planning Commission has reviewed proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments related to industrial lands for the last several years, including several repeat amendments from the same property owners. The Commission docketed several proposed FLUM changes in 2017 pending the results of the Mayor's Task Force on Industrial Lands. In the absence of any recommendations from that task force, the Commission has been consistent in their opposition to removing industrial lands from the MICs.
- Commissioners asked Mr. Hubner who made the decision to move the proposed SPU amendment forward this year while all other proposed amendments related to industrial lands are being held back pending direction from the Mayor's Office. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD determined this amendment was somewhat different because, if approved, it would initiate a separate MIMP process.

- Commissioners acknowledged that SPU has done a lot of outreach. The Commission received very compelling letters from Susie Burke and the North Seattle Industrial Association.
- Commissioners noted that Copenhagen has a lot of waterfront industrial land that has been redeveloped. Commissioners believe that is not the direction for Seattle. As long as we have a vibrant port, we need to protect industrial lands.

The Planning Commission did not recommend approval of the proposed amendment to remove 4.7 acres from the BINMIC for expansion of SPU's campus.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Freeman and Mr. Hubner for their briefings.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.