



MINUTES

(Approved on 11-06-2019)

TIME: Wednesday, October 2, 2019, 5:00 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, Tacoma Municipal Building, 1st Floor
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

PRESENT: Anna Petersen (Chair), Jeff McInnis (Vice-Chair), Carolyn Edmonds, Ryan Givens, David Horne, Christopher Karnes, Brett Santhuff, Andrew Strobel, Alyssa Torrez

ABSENT: N/A

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Petersen called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. A quorum was declared.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda for the meeting was approved.

The minutes for the September 18, 2019 meeting was approved as amended. The amendment was on page 2, as follows:

- Commissioner McInnis commented in favor of the progress of the program ~~but was conscious about its speed. He would like to see it taken more slowly.~~ and its speed. In reference to the Urban Design Program, he expressed that it should proceed at a slower rate, more in line with that of the Residential Infill Pilot Program.

Susan Haigh, City's Clerk Office, swore in Commissioner Christopher Karnes, newly appointed to the Public Transportation position.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Tideflats Subarea Plan Update

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, presented the status of the preparation for the development of the Tideflats Subarea Plan. He focused on the work plan that would act as a guide for the project over the next few years, and key next steps that would require further discussion and guidance from the Planning Commission.

Mr. Atkinson provided an overview of the Port of Tacoma Manufacturing and Industrial Center, which is the focus area of the subarea plan. This is a large area compared to that of other subarea plans in the past – i.e. 10x larger than Tacoma Mall area, 4x larger than downtown. Other unique characteristics of the area such as its ecosystem and being prone to natural risks/disasters also contribute to distinguishing this subarea plan from previous ones. After providing background information on the area, Mr. Atkinson

explained the benefits of the subarea plan. The overarching goal is to develop a shared vision for the area among all governments involved, which in turn would help prioritize and coordinate development in the future.

Mr. Atkinson went on to provide more details of the work plan: what it is (general content, advisory, and intergovernmental) and what it is not (scope of work, approval, and complete community process). He also described the structure of the teams and committee involved, along with their roles in the subarea plan process. The subarea plan would address topics in various categories including a vision for the area, environment, land use, economy, public services and facilities, and transportation. Looking forward in the process, the next milestone is consultant selection, followed by the Steering Committee's development of the subarea plan and the Planning Commission's review before the City Council's review and adoption through the legislative process.

Commissioner Edmonds began the Commission's discussion by commending the work plan. Regarding the multi-jurisdictional element, she inquired whether this was the first time or there had been precedence. While the concept of joint-planning is widely known, the Tideflats Subarea Plan is technically a pioneer project of its kind that the City of Tacoma is involved in. It was noted that collaboration would run deeper and require more time to understand each jurisdiction's goal. Commissioner Edmonds also asked about the Tideflats Interim Regulations, specifically concerning the renewal frequency and feedback on the regulations. The feedback generally falls into two main topics: one about uncertainty of future development and investment opportunities, the other concerning the restriction on new big development in the area.

Commissioner Karnes inquired about the timeline of the subarea plan, which has not been determined due to various reasons. Commissioner Santhuff wanted the subarea plan to explore other zoning uses, not just industrial, and consider the transition beyond city limits. He also would like the area around Sound Transit's station (for the planned Tacoma Dome Link Extension) on Portland Avenue to be studied for potentially a different zoning option. Commissioner Givens added that he would like to see an employment center with amenities and services for workers, and the Planning Commission to have meaningful involvement in early stage of the subarea plan process.

2. Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS) – Planning Actions

Brian Boudet, Manager of Planning Services Division, provided an overview of the Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS), a strategic response to the housing issues and crisis in Tacoma. The AHAS identifies 4 objectives to be accomplished through 27 actions, of which 12 actions are being pushed forward by the City Council. Included in the 12 actions are two significant initiatives that are closely related to the work of the Planning Commission, i.e., Action 1.2: Inclusionary Zoning and Action 1.8: Diverse Housing Types.

The basic idea of inclusionary zoning is to get affordable housing incorporated into market base housing; it is one of the few actions in the AHAS that do not require direct subsidy. Mr. Boudet explained the requirements and incentives of inclusionary zoning. The City has existing provisions for inclusionary zoning, most of which are voluntary but ineffective. The City Council expressed that they would prefer Voluntary to Mandatory, and want effective policies from both revising existing ones and new recommendations. Mr. Boudet also detailed other initial input provided by the City Council.

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, continued the presentation by explaining diverse housing types, which are "natural-occurring" housing options to support broader affordability (not dedicated affordability). He presented the Future Land Use Map to demonstrate that a large portion of the City is designated for single-family development, which poses limitations on how much housing could be built and the diversity of housing types. Recent actions in regards to housing diversity were also presented. Mr. Barnett indicated that other cities had similar plans in place for several years, and the City of Tacoma could learn from them especially on what policies to implement, types of messages, communication, challenges, etc.

Mr. Barnett also presented the proposed planning work program for implementing the two initiatives (Actions 1.2 and 1.8), including the phased approach, components of the analysis, and the corresponding timeline.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Givens stated that he would like to go through a data analysis exercise and recommended, for market study, looking into criteria for lending money to developers. Vice-Chair McInnis inquired about why existing policies were ineffective. Mr. Boudet analyzed that one potential cause might be the City putting in place programs at times that their markets had not adequately formed yet.

Commissioner Strobel asked about how the AHAS, originally with over 20 actions, was consolidated to 12 actions. Mr. Boudet indicated that the Council did not eliminate the other actions, but through a prioritization process, decided to first move forward with actions that were more achievable and could make the most impact. Commissioner Strobel also commented on homelessness and transitioning people out of homelessness, asking if the Diverse Housing Types initiative would look into transitional housing types to accommodate the issue.

Commissioner Karnes asked what was considered a benchmark for affordable housing, noting that people exchanged transportation cost to go further out to unincorporated Pierce County to access more affordable housing. Given that efficient transportation offsets housing costs, he recommended factoring in transportation cost as part of affordability.

Commissioner Edmonds wanted clarification for whether the discussion was on rental housing or home ownership, adding that the market forces for rental and mortgage could be very different and the two types could not be grouped together. Staff acknowledged that while an individual might be able to afford to rent, renting cost constantly changes in, most often, upwards direction, whereas mortgage rate gets locked in. The discussion of affordable housing includes both rental and home ownership, but it is split into different levels of low income. Chair Petersen commented that demographics were changing, not everyone would want to own a home but there were also drawbacks to not having an opportunity to own a home. She emphasized that it was crucial to consider family stability. For instance, children repeatedly changing school due to their family's housing change could have negative impact on the children and the community. She also added that the market study needed to include a breakdown of ownership vs. rental needs and the changing needs of demographics.

Commissioner Santhuff was concerned about inclusionary zoning and development capacity. He would be interested in tiered approach for voluntary vs. mandatory affordable units. For diverse housing types, he preferred housing that could be more adaptive, capable of potentially renting out a room or a unit. Commissioner Strobel questioned if the AHAS had any housing survey conducted and, if so, how long ago. He suggested that, instead of predicting what people need, conducting surveys and gathering input from them (needs, housing situations, etc.). Commissioner Torrez raised a question on incentives for people to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on their property. While there are no capital incentives or bonuses, there are attempts to remove barriers in code and permitting when people apply for ADUs. Additionally, Commissioner Givens stated that he liked the idea of allowing more dwelling units in neighborhood (potentially through conditional use permit, a powerful tool) and encouraged further discussion in the near future.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda, including the cancellation of the next meeting on October 16, 2019.

Mr. Boudet introduced Tasha Santos, a new planner who had recently moved from the Current Planning team to join the Long Range Planning team.

The City Council adopted a proclamation in celebration of the Community Planning month of October on Tuesday, October 1, 2019. The Mayor expressed her appreciation to the Planning Commission for all the hard work.

Regarding the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) project, Sound Transit would present at the Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday, November 6, 2019.

The City Council adopted a modification to the park code on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, which will go in effect in December 2019. The modification restricts temporary structures, i.e. tents, from being in parks.

The Prairie Line Trail celebration will take place on Thursday, October 3, 2019. The Commission is invited to attend and celebrate the completion of the trail.

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, informed the Commission that, in reference to the Short Courses in the Communication Items of the agenda, the Commission is encouraged to attend. The time for the Local Transportation Planning course has been updated to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 10, 2019. The courses are free and registration is required.

Commissioner Karnes introduced himself, providing education information, work background, and public service record.

F. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

****These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length audio recording of the meeting, please visit:***

http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees_boards_commissions/planning_commission/agendas_and_minutes/