



## **MINUTES**

(Approved as Amended on 10-02-2019)

**TIME:** Wednesday, September 18, 2019, 5:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Council Chambers, Tacoma Municipal Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

**PRESENT:** Anna Petersen (Chair), Jeff McInnis (Vice-Chair), Carolyn Edmonds, Ryan Givens, David Horne, Brett Santhuff

**ABSENT:** Christopher Karnes, Andrew Strobel, Alyssa Torrez

### **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 and the minutes for the meeting of August 21, 2019 were approved as submitted.

### **C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **D. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **1. Urban Design Program**

Mesa Sherriff, Planning Services Division, gave an overview of the prepared presentation. He also provided update from the Project Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Committee meetings, emphasizing topics that the committees had paid additional attention to.

Keith Walzak from VIA Architecture proceeded to go over the timeline for meetings and updates. This meeting would focus on code audit findings.

Lee Einsweiler from Code Studio presented basis for recommendations that consultants had prepared while clarifying that they did not yet represent proposed City actions. He explained the organization of the recommendations, ranking them in different levels of importance. The high important ones were explained in details. Mr. Einsweiler identified and provided examples of challenges in the program as well as ones that the current code was unable to address. He also discussed alternative compliance. It could serve as a way to have a design discussion; instead of reducing the standard for a specific project, the applicant would be expected to meet the intention of the code in a different way.

Mr. Walzak provided status update on the operation manual. He went over input received from the Commission and explained how they factored into the changes of the manual. Three categories of design management were presented: a base code only for projects below threshold, a base code with staff approval for projects above threshold, and a base code with the Design Review Board (DRB) approval for complicated projects or appeals and referrals. He went on to the Design Review Steps, emphasizing

Concept Review (Step 2) and Final Review (Step 3) as the formal review steps. Mr. Walzak concluded his presentation with the guidelines document structure, explaining that each component would be broken down into levels of increasing details.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner McInnis had questions about the alternative compliance, especially about the process in which it would be determined. The intent statement of the code would be the guideline to judge whether alternatives complied with the code. The Commission also commented on the idea of internal blocks to reduce block size and keep them consistent, as well as the transition where a single-family zone is adjacent to a mixed-use center. There are mitigating negatives such as noise, smell, etc. The issue needs to be further looked into. Chair Petersen recommended building placement, orientation, and density to be considered of High Importance.

Commissioners Givens and McInnis were concerned about the pre-application requirement. They would like to avoid having developers carry out additional work before even getting an answer to whether they could proceed to designing. Commissioner Givens was uncomfortable with the threshold that would pump to the DRB. On that note, Chair Petersen suggested including street frontage and corner visibility as criteria in the threshold. She also commented in favor of the intent statement idea and the structure of the manual. Using 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue as an example, she noted that some areas might be conflicting in terms of vision vs. context. She would like to make sure that public streetscape would be included in the guidelines.

The meeting was recessed at 6:50 p.m. and resumed at 6:57 p.m.

## **2. Residential Infill Pilot Program 2.0**

Mesa Sherriff, Planning Services Division, began with a recap from the Planning Commission meeting in April. He, then, provided findings from the Pilot Program 2017-2019 along with recommendations for code changes and administrative changes drawn from the Commission's feedback. He introduced New Project Types of Flexible Option and Affordable Options, and gave sample calculations of what the density would look like and how they would count as units.

The Pilot Program process was presented. Mr. Sherriff explained the difference between the current process and the proposed one, highlighting that the proposed process would require less time and potentially less resources without compromising the review.

Commissioner Givens liked the idea of trading Multi-Family for the Flexible Option. Commissioner Santhuff asked for clarification on the intent of having optional committee meeting. The optional meeting would serve as a trial review for appropriate projects and would be initiated by applicants, rather than staff. He also commented on some proposed changes that he had reservations about, especially duplexes on mid-block lots and on corner lots. It is desirable for duplexes on corner lots to have distinguishable entrances. Chair Petersen liked the opportunity to have the Flexible Option and had no objection to exploring mid-block duplexes. 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.

## **3. Elections of Officers for 2019-2020**

Commissioner Santhuff made a motion of nomination, which was seconded by Commissioner Horne, for Chair and Vice-Chair of the 2019-2020 term as follows:

- Anna Petersen as Chair

- Jeff McInnis as Vice-Chair

Both nominees accepted their nominations. Election was conducted, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **E. TOPICS OF THE UPCOMING MEETING**

- (1) October 2, 2019:
  - (a) Tideflats Subarea Plan Update
  - (b) Affordable Housing Action Strategy
- (2) October 16, 2019 – Staff proposed that this meeting be canceled, to allow Commissioners and staff to attend the 2019 APA Washington Annual Conference (Oct. 16-17) and Short Courses on Local Planning (Oct. 10 and Oct. 16), in Tacoma. The Commission concurred.

## **F. COMMUNICATION ITEMS**

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

Brian Boudet, Manager of the Planning Services Division, reported to the Commission that the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee reviewed the Planning Commission's Annual Report for 2018-2019 and Planning Work Program for 2019-2021 at its meeting on September 4, 2019. The Committee made no changes to the work program and expressed appreciation for the work that the Planning Commission had done.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> reading of the 2019 Annual Amendment, there were a couple minor modifications. The recommendation to downzone the west side of McKinley was removed; and a small area on Pearl Street was made R-4L instead of R-3 as recommended.

Mr. Boudet also provided a brief report on the Tacoma Dome Link Extension, focusing the consideration of the location options.

Regarding the Affordable Housing Action Strategy, the City Council has carried out some actions, especially Inclusionary Zoning, which the Commission had been involved in. If it moved forward, the topic would go through the Commission again.

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reported that October was the National Planning Month. Staff is asking the Mayor to make a proclamation to make October a Planning Month in Tacoma. The proclamation is scheduled to be made on October 1, 2019. The Chair and Vice-Chair are invited to attend the meeting to receive the proclamation.

## **G. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 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/](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees_boards_commissions/planning_commission/agendas_and_minutes/)