



MINUTES

(Approved on April 20, 2022)

MEETING: Regular Meeting (virtual)

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, April 6, 2022, 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Anna Petersen (Chair), Christopher Karnes (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dornier (arrived late), Ryan Givens, Robb Krehbiel, Brett Santhuff, Anthony Steele, Andrew Strobel, Alyssa Torrez

ABSENT: N/A

A. Call to Order

Chair Petersen called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Petersen read the Land Acknowledgement.

B. Approval of Agenda

Vice-Chair Karnes moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of Minutes

- March 2, 2022
- March 16, 2022

Commissioner Steele moved to approve the minutes of the March 2, and March 16, 2022, meetings as submitted. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Public Comments

Chair Petersen reported that there were no comments received regarding the Design Review Program update; and written comments regarding the public hearing are accepted through April 8, 2022.

E. Disclosure of Contacts

Commissioner Strobel disclosed that he and Commissioner Torrez will possibly discuss the Home In Tacoma project with Tacoma Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Commissioner Steele disclosed that he has had discussions regarding the Home In Tacoma project and the public hearing on the 2022 Annual Amendment package with the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance.

F. Discussion Items

1. Design Review Program Update

Carl Metz, Senior Planner, presented the Design Review Program update, including a project overview, the preliminary geographic scope review, preliminary development thresholds review, community engagement strategy, and timeline of next steps.

Commissioner Steele requested clarification on the different thresholds on the neighborhood and mixed-use corridors versus downtown, pedestrian corridors.

Commissioner Dornier arrived here, at 5:21 p.m.

Vice-Chair Karnes expressed concerns regarding the proposed geography and the overlap with the Home In Tacoma project, which could potentially lead to impacts on project development and housing affordability.

Chair Petersen requested information on how many projects are likely to meet the development thresholds that are being proposed, how much this project interacts with Home In Tacoma, and if there is consideration given to frontage on the streets rather than just square footage of a building.

Commissioner Strobel expressed concerns regarding the square footage standard and asked if the Design Review Project Advisory Group has looked at triggers that would identify impacts or would force the project through the design review process.

Commissioner Santhuff provided comments on the goal to develop standards that produce better buildings throughout the city, and the theme with discussion on geography and threshold is to ensure the program is easily understood and managed from the administration standpoint and for the development community.

Commissioner Dorner asked for clarification on the purpose and benefits of a design review.

The Planning Commission recessed at 5:42 p.m. and reconvened at 5:47 p.m.

G. Public Hearing

2. 2022 Annual Amendment Package

Chair Petersen called the public hearing to order at 5:47 p.m. and outlined the procedures of the public hearing, noting that testimony will be taken separately for each application.

Commissioners introduced themselves.

Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, presented an overview of the amendment process and schedule, the four applications - NewCold Land Use Designation Change, South Sound Christian Schools Land Use Designation Change, Work Plan for South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District Code Amendments, and Minor Plan and Code Amendments - public hearing notification, and the public hearing process.

Chair Petersen called for testimony. Fifteen people testified, as follows:

(1) NewCold Land Use Designation Change:

1. Maddie Merton – I'm here tonight to urge you to support NewCold's 2022 Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code amendment to rezone a portion of a parcel located at 4601 South Orchard Street from light industrial to heavy industrial. This would allow NewCold to apply for permits to expand its existing cold storage facility. The cold storage currently serves the much-needed food manufacturing industry – fish, french fries, and ice cream products are currently being distributed there. NewCold's fully automated building design and scale provide immense value to manufacturers and also strengthens food chain reliability. That facility increases Tacoma-Pierce County's resilience to increasing challenges, including pandemics, manmade and natural disasters. The NewCold site is key in the transportation of goods within the region from manufacturers to consumers. Due to the company's highly automated operations and technology, the company facilities generate efficiencies within the transportation system that the supply chain otherwise will not be able to offer. NewCold's core business is to promote growth and vitality of the Portland port-related industry. And most of the products that go through the site has to support Tacoma, supporting our transportation system as well. A case study showed that NewCold's warehouses, on average, consume 40% less energy per cubic liter annually compared to traditional cold storage facilities. With their energy efficient design, they minimize development and operational impact on climate change. The design of the building allows NewCold to store products vertically; therefore, maximizing land use efficiency. When compared to the traditional warehouses, the footprint and the total surface area used are much smaller for the same quantity of goods. The company is advancing future technology and sustainable warehousing and also at the same time developing a skilled workforce to run this operation. Please support NewCold's application.

2. Greg Bowers – I stand in favor of this zoning change. Not only does NewCold provide living wage jobs, but the construction of these projects provides many, many construction wage jobs as well for the community. So, I stand in favor of this rezoning.
3. Heidi White – I am not in support of changing the area, the NewCold storage area, from light industrial to heavy industrial. I live here, and I think it's going to create more noise and more traffic. It's also over the Groundwater Protection District area, and I just think that it's not a good idea.
4. Esther Day – I am very concerned about the NewCold requests for expansion of heavy industrial zoning for larger refrigerated warehouse, because more land will be covered and there will be more heat and air pollution. I have been researching, and there are so many warehouses currently right now in Tacoma that are sitting vacant. The drive-in theater off South Tacoma Way has nothing but warehouses and is vacant. Why aren't we utilizing those instead of rezoning? So, I'm dead against this, and we need to make sure that we reduce pollution, not increase it. Groundwater needs to be protected.
5. Tim Smith – As this amendment is currently proposed for this change to heavy industry, I oppose it in its current form. Firstly, the pursuant overlying zoning is the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District, and the amendment, as proposed, really does little to address the impacts that this facility is going to have. Specifically, since it is a large cold storage facility, it'll have high quantities of anhydrous ammonia. We've recently seen the fires at a similar cold storage facility in Puyallup where they just had to let it burn. Fortunately, the weather was right. It was a rather warm day, and the burning anhydrous ammonia and all other products were able to go up to the sky. This facility is located on top of high ground, and when that happens in our typical rainy weather in Tacoma, that ammonia will drift to the ground, go into the neighboring neighborhood, and require a one-mile evacuation radius - which is also not addressed in the amendment. I think the traffic study needs to be relooked and be done when we are not in a pandemic. Traffic levels were low when the study was done. I think it might even have been done on a Sunday morning. So that really needs to be relooked at, as well as the conditions that should be placed on this to pass the requirement for updates to mitigate any traffic impacts on to the developer that the taxpayer in Tacoma should not have to pay - the changes to streets, turning lanes, and traffic lights - whenever the impact is from traffic to a specific facility. And more of a general holistic sense, the product here is primarily sea life that is extracted from the ocean. I cannot believe that we would continue to support an industry that's mining our seas at a time of massive climate change and ocean die off. So, as it is currently proposed, I can't support this amendment.

(2) South Sound Christian Schools Land Use Designation Change:

6. Esther Day – I am not in favor of this project that is being proposed. The cutting down of tree canopies is nuts. I've learned firsthand what trees do to clean the air. Having had a tree in my yard that was cleaning the petroleum products that airplanes drop. I cut Christmas tree branches that were black on top, and they could not clean it out. These trees provide life-saving clean air for our community. We cannot be willy-nilly destroying our canopies that are necessary. And be careful about so much development before you really know what's really going to work for Tacoma. We're building far too many apartments and not enough condos and townhouses. We need to take it easy and slow down. I'm totally against this project.

(3) Work Plan for South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District Code Amendments:

7. Heidi Stephens – I am speaking in support of the South Tacoma Economic Green Zone amendment and for your approval of the Phase 1A Work Plan to update the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District policy - which is long overdue. Projects within the South Tacoma aquifer recharge area should not only have had groundwater protection land use as first consideration, but it seems to be largely overlooked in the permit processes which must be corrected. Loss of open space vegetation and increase of impervious surfaces require data collection and review on effects to groundwater infiltration anywhere within this designated geohydrologically sensitive area. This is why I'm also asking this Commission to add a

moratorium recommendation on all permit approvals until after the Groundwater Protection code has been appropriately brought up to current best-science standards. With the creation of new green land use code for this environmentally critical area, strong policy to protect groundwater from contamination, and for replenish supply will not only protect the environment and public health, but it's also the best economic choice for truly sustainable business into the future.

8. Heidi White – I support this, and I think that if possible to streamline it as quickly as possible, because we're seeing more and more people asking for heavy industrial use in that area. I think that we need to support this and get it through as quickly as possible. It's not rocket science, it should have been done in the 1950s, and I really support it. I live here. I breathe the air. We need the groundwater protection desperately.
9. Esther Day – I agree with the last few speakers. We need to stop the insanity and we need to move the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District update forward quickly. Water belongs to all of us Tacoma residents, not just to the immediate area. I strongly support the South Tacoma Economic Green Zone Phase 1A work plan for approval, we need to move the process faster. Tacoma desperately needs an updated water protection policy, which is long overdue. Furthermore, the creation of a green zone performance-based land use code is urgently needed without further delay. We really need to use science, not just gut instinct. We need to figure out if we want to come to be a warehouse district or apartment district, or do we want to build family communities and businesses that support real jobs, not just big, huge spaces that will destroy our water. We need to protect every single aquifer we have in Tacoma. Please, if you need to put a moratorium on this, do it, do the science, and make sure our water is protected.
10. Elly Claus-McGahan – Climate Pierce County sent in a letter supporting the work for updating the Groundwater Protection code and specifically to adopt the South Tacoma Economic Green Zone proposal as part of the amendment. Tonight, I speak on my own behalf. Given the precariousness of our future from the coming worsening impacts of climate change, it is very important that my city of Tacoma go the extra mile and follows the lead of its own climate action plan to work hard and fast on doing all we can to protect our health and environment, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and grow a green economy that will help sustain these efforts and support our communities. Part of that is protecting our water resources of which the South Tacoma aquifer is a big one. We also need to protect our air, protect our trees, and protect our communities from the harms that they already face and will face. Starting the process to designate the area above the aquifer as an Economic Green Zone meets all of those objectives. It gives a new future to the South Tacoma community with a focus on green jobs that will reduce pollution, protect our resources, and help us to think differently about our relationship with each other and with this planet. This is Earth Month, there is no better time to get going on a project that meets the Climate Action Plan's actions and philosophy and sets a new course on how we develop economically while protecting where we live. It very much concerns me that as this project is being considered in this context, the city is also in the process of considering a huge warehouse project to be placed on top of the aquifer. How these two will work together is not clear.
11. Tim Smith – I fully support the amendment put forth by the South Tacoma Neighborhood Council for a complete review and update of TMC 13.06.070.D. In 1988, the city of Tacoma found that it was necessary and in the public interest to establish the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District. A full review of the governing zoning overlays long overdue and must incorporate up-to-date best science. The failure to do these needed updates has created a situation that allows for the siting of new and proposed developments where the intent and purpose of the Groundwater Protection District has been placed far down the list when determining safe suitability and impact of these major developments. The area represented by this proposal covers one fifth of the city area and is designated as an environmentally geohydrologically sensitive area. The intent of the Groundwater Protection District, the current law, and the proposed work plan to update the current law is to establish orderly procedures that reduce the risk to public health and safety and maintain the existing

groundwater supply within the district as near as reasonably possible to its natural condition of purity. All properties and developments within the protection district shall comply with these requirements, and any additional requirements of the sub zoning districts to provisions of the existing groundwater code shall control. This bottom-up community amendment application was for both an update in 2022 as well as a proposal for an entirely new look at the potential for green economic activities that support the primary zoning protections of the existing code. The proposal aligns with at least 25 major goals of the Climate Action Plan put forth by the City of Tacoma. Stretching this out minimizes the primacy of this most vital protective code and creates the conditions for continued development to exploit weaknesses and vulnerabilities and dilutes the synergy of addressing the current climate crisis, the ongoing improvements to the South Tacoma wellfield being done by TPU, as well as current updates to the Wellhead Protection Plan, also done by Tacoma Power and Water. Please support this initiative. Integrate and accelerate the proposals for the Economic Green Zone. Please suspend current major development applications and place a moratorium on any currently underway until the superseding district code is updated. Water is life.

12. Maddie Merton – I would urge the Planning Commission and also the staff to conduct more outreach to the business community. Hearing that there are none here tonight, I'm just curious to what level of information is being shared to that community as they're the ones with those facilities. So, my ask is for more outreach in person or information sessions for business communities, so they are aware that this is happening.

(4) Minor Plan and Code Amendments:

13. Heidi White – I live in the Manitou area, a few blocks from the annexation, which is number 15 in the Minor Plan and Code Amendments. I'm opposed to aligning it. We've had many meetings about this. Our first meeting on May 14, 2018, - which was a largest turn out, including businesses and residents - they strongly supported keeping R-2 over the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) single dwelling district - which I know now is low-density, and you want to change it to mid-scale. We don't need any more mid-scale. We have plenty in our area. We have plenty in south Tacoma, and I hope that you support opposing the recommendations that are set forth for the Manitou Annexation and keep it as it is with no changes to the density.
14. Toney Montgomery – I'm specifically here to address the part of number four, where you are considering changing or redefining what a family is in the City of Tacoma. I just want to put three essential questions on the table. Since its incorporation on November 12, 1875, the City of Tacoma have thrived on the back of the singular institution of what we know as the family. The family is the first of all institutions and is the foundation that supports all other institutions - church, government education, and the list goes on - all institutions built upon that one singular institution called the family. The definition of family is established through the eons. What is the present scope of work in the City of Tacoma, that can necessitate the city to redefine what a family is? Please, know that if you destroy the foundation of this institution of the city, it won't be long before the city crumbles. Secondly, who stands to benefit if the definition of family is changed in the city code? Who stands to lose if the definition of family is changed in the city code? And thirdly, what could necessitate such a precedent change, and is the City of Tacoma so well financed, that it can handle all of the litigation that will follow such a monumental redefinition of what a family is?
15. Gregory Christopher – I just want to say on behalf of the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance, that we are in total agreement with the remarks by Elder Toney Montgomery. We feel like the family is the backbone of one of our most significant faith doctrines, and to go down that road, could be very dangerous. The faith community would never support that, so please consider that.

Chair Petersen closed the public hearing at 6:35 p.m., reiterated that written comments are accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 8, 2022, and thanked those who testified.

Chair Petersen asked Commissioners if there are any requests for staff to look into and respond at the next meeting on April 20, 2022. Commissioner Krehbiel requested that staff explore the feasibility and the legality

of a moratorium or suspension of permits that may impact the economic green zone. Commissioner Givens asked for information on what the land use and permitting processes will be, in relation to the NewCold and South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District areas.

H. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the April 20, 2022, meeting includes:

- 2022 Annual Amendment Public Hearing Debriefing
- Public Hearing – Scope of Work for Home in Tacoma Phase 2

(2) Agenda for the May 4, 2022, meeting includes:

- Capital Facilities Program Update
- Proposed College Park Historic District
- 2022 Annual Amendment Recommendation

Commissioner Givens requested that ample time is allotted for the public hearing debriefing at the April 20, 2022 meeting.

I. Communication Items

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

(1) Mr. Atkinson informed the commission of the following:

- Staff is looking into a six-month calendar for the Commission to identify what the work program is going to look like over the summer.
- The 2023 Amendment application period has ended, and staff has begun the assessment of those.
- On March 24, 2022, the Tideflats Steering Committee finalized a recommendation on the draft alternatives to be considered in the EIS scoping process, and will be coming back to the Planning Commission.
- Reconstitution for City staff to return to the office has begun, and the Long-Range Planning staff will potentially return in July; however, there is not a definitive timeline.

J. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 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/