

SEQUIM PLANNING COMMISSION

Transit Center
190 West Cedar Street
Sequim, WA 98382
Tuesday, May 17, 2011

6:00 P.M. Regular Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL:

Arndt, Gardiner, Peterson, Protze, Richmond, and Sterhan were present. Wendt was excused.

Staff present: Planning Director Chris Hugo and Deputy City Clerk Bobbie Usselman.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 10, 2011

The minutes will be presented for approval at the next meeting.

III. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

V. OLD BUSINESS:

Amendments to Chapter 18.88 pertaining to zoning text amendments

Hugo stated the change in the code is a better legal foundation and reduces redundancy. It also allows amendment to the zoning code more often than once a year. Hugo indicated up until January the code included a table that identified the uses allowed.

Peterson asked why drive-throughs were removed. Hugo indicated the street access and sidewalk environments can erode the quality of the pedestrian environment and is a safety issue. That will be the same in the Downtown Plan. It is not uncommon.

Peterson asked when we would address the items that are not being changed now. Hugo said it would probably be at the time of the Comp Plan Update.

MOTION by Richmond that the Planning Commission recommend that City Council accept the amendments to Chapter 18.88 and Chapter 18.20; second by Arndt.

Sterhan asked about the R-V overlay. Hugo said that was a housekeeping measure. It was put there in anticipation of the adoption of the Downtown Plan and it would require a future designation of zoning. The R-V zone will be superseded in the Downtown Plan. It

does not have a life any more. The Downtown Plan doesn't discuss densities. It is dependent upon the size of the building and number of units created; it is space control rather than number of units. The overlay is intended to be applied in certain designated locations of a downtown subarea.

Vote on Motion: **Unanimously approved.**

- A. Downtown Plan
 - 1. Public comments - None
 - 2. Commission deliberations on draft Plan

Hugo stated there are three letters that came in opposing the woonerf. The concerns relate to the details of a woonerf project. We are just at the planning stage. He has assured them that parking, access and special needs get involved in the design development stage down the road. We expect to find a design that fits all users. All affected parties will be involved.

Gardiner said there may be confusion by those complainants that they may lose their parking. Hugo stated we assured them that the parking they own won't be automatically shared with others. They will not be denied access. There is also concern about the parking in the right-of-way. Apparently private parking owners are claiming ownership of right-of-way parking. It is for the benefit of the entire City. It is not as simple as saying we have always parked there; but they have been parking on City property. Parking is a big challenge.

Richmond would like an interpretation of Jon Wendt's concern about the roof feature. Hugo said you are not allowed to create a space for a sign. The existing code does not allow roof signs. Hugo stated we will look at that to make sure there is no loophole.

Sterhan commented on equipment screens. Hugo said equipment screening is more attuned to residential areas with mechanical showing. Hugo stated we will also look at that.

Hugo confirmed this plan will be submitted to Council for adoption with any recommendations from the Planning Commission. It will not be able to be changed until the next Comp Plan Update.

Arndt asked if the Plan Concept on Page 14 is set in stone. Hugo said it was a suggestion. Page 15 of the plan is more detailed. Page 38 shows the zoning map. Page 15 will be included in the Comp Plan and page 38 in the zoning map. The plan can be changed once a year; the zoning can change any time.

Arndt is concerned with the transportation plan freight friendly route. He is concerned about rights-of-way as they are hard to get. Hugo said this doesn't change anything, it is a suggestion to work on this and hopefully make it a reality. It is directed to the Public

Works people to figure out something that works. If this isn't the right idea, you should comment on it now. Arndt doesn't understand why you have a bypass if the freight is going downtown. Hugo said this is a way to divert local bound freight but no bypass freight. The orange line is a freight friendly route going north. We are trying to divert the traffic away from the City center. It doesn't affect the 101 freight but still accommodates the local delivery into the core.

Sterhan said it was discussed in the past if they don't have to be downtown that they should go on a different route. This came out of talking to people on staff and citizens' issues with freight.

Protze suggested the ODT should be part of the transportation system. The missing link should be on the map. He suggests the route leave the park; go down the path along the creek and then along Washington Place. It would not impact many residences.

Hugo stated the Commission is not being pushed to make a decision tonight. Tonight is the night to ask questions. Hugo indicated the executive summary will reflect changes made. Objectives are part of the work assignment to guide the project.

Policies:

Land Use and Intensity

Peterson said on item 5 that throughout the plan there are restrictions of residential in the commercial area. He wonders what the mindset is to have it that exclusive in the commercial zone. One focus is to get as many people living in the downtown core. He is concerned we won't allow the market to allow residential in the commercial area because it has to be on the second floor. Hugo stated residential on the street level puts people where they don't want to live. Pedestrians can look directly into your home. If you have residential on the first floor, you are taking retail off the street level. It is only in the core district that it would apply. It does not exclude B&Bs or hotels. Peterson said for people currently in the downtown core that want to change their property, they would have to convert to existing standards. Hugo said 18.57.020 will not allow residential use on the ground level in the downtown core. Peterson feels the downtown core is too large an area for this restriction. It is an economic issue. It isn't reality based. Arndt agrees.

Richmond said she doesn't understand what we are going to be asked to recommend. This is a draft. How do you approve and adopt a draft to move forward when there is language on page 6 under policies such as "a mixture of uses is desired." Hugo said this is common policy language. We want these things to happen, but policies are not rules or codes. We prefer our future be like this. Richmond doesn't understand adopting a direction every time people talk to someone who has extensive experience in these areas. She was on the panel to help choose the consultant for this plan. This document keeps changing – we could say we like the trend but she doesn't feel she can commit to this document, nor can the consultant.

Arndt asked if this pertained strictly to new businesses or existing businesses. Two different architectural styles are a mish-mash in his mind. Hugo feels that is what gives downtowns character. He likes organic downtowns that have evolved over time. That is an honest downtown. This is a 20 year plan for downtown. You have to be cautious of precluding the future of this community.

Peterson said other than infrastructure any other development will be for profit. He is concerned for those here now making it economically viable for others to be here. Anything that makes it more restrictive to having people live close to the core puts it at odds. The market will never support a single-family residence on Washington, but may well support a tri-plex on Cedar or Spruce. Hugo said the plan looks to the future when the economy changes. We shouldn't continue patterns on what the market is today. Investing in low density residential will put a noose in downtown. You must look to the future. Higher density, mixed-use and commercial is what belongs in the core or downtown won't grow.

Richmond wants to know what our responsibility is if we suggest approval. Hugo said you are raising questions and trying to confirm your questions on the appropriateness of the plan. You can recommend it with changes and suggest concerns for Council to consider. You are in control of the form of your recommendation. Council needs to know if you are supporting it or suggesting changes to the document.

Richmond is concerned about how much limitation we are placing on the City. Hugo said Council will have similar issues. What you are bringing up is the perspective you have. The more direction you give to Council on your degree of support or better is best. That makes your role more important. Their ability to rely on you can be valuable.

Sterhan said on policy 3, gateways, he feels the west end is an urban area. This is focused on the downtown area but not much focus on the east and west ends of town. Maybe it doesn't need to be a major part of the study. He feels you need to consider what is going on in either end of the City. He would think that would be an important part of the plan. Hugo said the assignment was to focus on the downtown core. The Comp Plan Update would show how a community operates in connectiveness and the gateways could be a big part of that. They do deserve more attention.

Gardiner said on #7, building heights, that she is a proponent of 3 floors but can live with 4 floors. Hugo indicated the second floor would be set back so it is not as visible.

Richmond feels a more distinct designation should be placed, not using "Washington Street" and "Downtown Core" interchangeably. They are not interchangeable; that distinction is important. This Commission has had a number of meetings interrupted with citizens confusing affordable housing with low income housing. Hugo appreciates that and has picked up the same narrative as the report. The downtown core and Washington are not synonymous. Richmond feels Washington Street lots should receive separate rules. She feels there should be 4 zones – Washington Street and then the other streets in the downtown core. Hugo said you will be forming a recommendation. If you have a

recommendation with a lot of comments, he isn't sure how it would be considered. He feels you should come together with a consensus or drop an issue.

Sterhan said the downtown core has a specific shape. Hugo said the boundaries were created after considering the areas around the downtown core. If the Burrowes property was developed it would have a huge impact on the downtown core. The challenge is to consider what Sequim will be like in 20 years.

Transportation

Peterson didn't see an emphasis for a City investment in off-street parking. Parking is a thorny problem. Anything the City can do to encourage shared parking is important. How much effort is being invested in approaching properties that the City can develop for off-street parking? If we attract people to a pedestrian-friendly downtown some will need a place to park. Hugo said parking is on the Action Matrix. There is a dilemma, an opportunity and a challenge with parking. It is inherent to the plan.

Gardiner said a parking count was done that numbered about 240. People feel if they can't park in front of where they want to shop, there isn't enough parking. Hugo stated as the plan grows, so does the parking. Parking is not prohibited in 18.57.020. This is a good point to get clarified.

Sterhan indicated 18.57.010 states, "visible surface parking lots would be replaced with parking behind buildings or within structures." Hugo said it helps explain what some of the rules are. Hugo will confirm this. Peterson suggested having parking on vacant lots in the core. It was again commented the ODT was not included in the plan.

Richmond stated in her experience of having a Washington Street business that the pedestrian concept is great, but consider our population and our weather. People come out reluctantly in the rain. Our chamber brochure says it doesn't rain here, but it does. No one comes out when it is windy. The ideas are nice for creating the possibility of a younger more ambulatory group. These are good ideas but if people cannot park where they want to shop, they won't shop there. Everyone agreed. Hugo said we always look at alleys and pass-throughs for secondary stores there. There is over-walkway weather protection included in this plan.

Recess at 7:40 p.m.; resume at 7:47 p.m.

Economic development

Richmond commented based on her downtown business that downtown is not a destination for people who live here. The big box stores changed the outside public who come here but they do not go to downtown Sequim. She doesn't understand the basis of thought that will provide the basis for economic development downtown.

Gardiner said the policies are general. This is more a list of what we are already doing. Sequim is the Palm Springs of the northwest. It will grow and could grow in a pleasing way. She feels Sequim will outpace Port Angeles in all ways. Hugo said when he first came to Sequim he was impressed with downtown and feels there is energy here.

Gardiner said some of these do not read like policies, but more like a goals. Protze doesn't want the City to create a destination that competes with his B&B.

It was stated there are three paragraphs that are too specific to be policies.

Peterson said he feels we should work with our Chamber and not have a Main Street program. We should not have to buy outside expertise.

Protze said #8 talks about historic buildings and was sad to see the remodel of the Hurricane Coffee building on Washington and Sequim Avenues that now looks like a strip mall.

Richmond said she was in the interview process for the Design Review Board. The design standards were created. The DRB does a good job. Everything they did that referred to downtown was set aside because of the Downtown Plan. We do need to get something implemented; we have everything in place to do it. The DRB has put together good standards and have proven itself. Hugo said design standards are included in the plan.

Community Character

Hugo said item 1 is trying to enhance the downtown. We are trying to indicate downtown is an important part of the community.

Peterson likes the concept of item 1. If you want to make downtown a destination and you want people to stop and shop, you should encourage them to drive through. They could then stop and park. Hugo said business owners want congestion downtown as it draws people there.

Housing

Peterson asked why affordable housing isn't included. Hugo said it is a city-wide issue. This should be addressed in the Comp Plan Update.

Sterhan commented that the City arranging incentive programs is too general.

Capital Facilities

Gardiner said using Seal Street as a public street will take a lot of thought. Hugo commented there is no private right to Seal Street.

Gardiner said the ODT is missing; and that the northeast corner of Sequim and Washington that should be a park - a sister park to the park across the street. Protze feels a fountain would be nice there. It would complete the primary intersection.

It was suggested a location be found for the Open Aire Market to be year-round in a covered area.

Parks and Recreation

The northeast corner of Sequim and Washington should be a park.

The Etta Street entry into Pioneer Park is a complication.

Utilities

New infrastructure cannot disrupt the flow of traffic through the core. It is devastating.

Gardiner stated at the next meeting we will review the strategies and land use regulations. Hugo stated the land use regulations are the most important part of this.

Peterson asked what other cities use the FAR concept. Hugo said Spokane and Bremerton use it. Hugo gave some examples of how FAR works. Here our FAR is no more than 4 and if you cover the whole site of 10,000 sf, you could have 4 floors of 10,000 sf, or 40,000 sf. There was general discussion on how the FAR method works.

3. Recommendation on Plan to City Council

None at this time.

VI. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hugo stated he is considering two applicants for the planner position. He hopes someone will be on board in less than 6 weeks.

A. Land Use training session July 13

Hugo stated Carol Morris will present a land use training on July 13.

VIII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

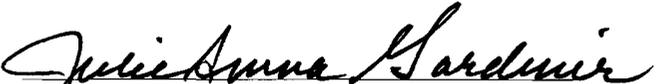
IX. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION to adjourn by Peterson; second by Arndt. **Unanimous.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Bobbie Usselman, CMC
Deputy City Clerk


JulieAnna Gardiner
Chair

Next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7, 2011