

MINUTES
Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting
May 10th, 2021
6:00 PM

In Person: City Hall was limited to 20 individuals.
Mask Usage was required of all attendees.

Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85637388112>
Conference Call: +1.253. 215. 8782 or +1.346. 248. 7799
ID #: 856 3738 8112

Attending: Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel; Commissioners Auguste Zettler, Davy Ray, Jeff Breckel, Mike Beck; Community Development Director Ben Shumaker.

Public attendees: Mary Repar, Rick May, Phil Crawford, Karen Rutledge, Julie May, Tracy Gratto, Pat Rice, Brian McNamara, Kelly O'Malley McKee, John Mobley, David Wyatt and other unidentified participants.

Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations:

PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel explained the public comment process and how to use the online tools to remotely participate. Please raise hand to comment, and limit comments to 3 minutes. Tools: For virtual attendees use *6 to mute/unmute & *9 to raise hand.

2. Public Comment Period: (For items not located elsewhere on the agenda)

>Mary Repar provided comments on affordable housing. She sent the Planning Commission a letter she would like to have entered into the public record. She spoke of a non-profit organization called REACH (reach.cdc.org) that purchases homes to use for affordable housing and suggested they may be worth further discussion. She encouraged thinking differently regarding home ownership or renters. She noted one definition of affordable housings indicates people should only spend 1/3 of their income for rental costs. She asked what can be done through policy and legislative changes to address the issue.

3. Minutes: March & April, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION to approve March 8th, 2021 regular Planning Commission meeting minutes, March 15th, 2021 Special Planning Commission meeting minutes and April 12th, 2021 regular Planning Commission meeting minutes as presented made by **Commissioner Beck**, seconded by **Commissioner Zettler**.

- Voting aye: **Commissioners Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Auguste Zettler, Davy Ray, Jeff Breckel, Mike Beck**

B. New Business

No new business was presented.

C. Old Business

4. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: Reestablishing Public Involvement Expectations

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker directed Commissioners to the staff report, which provided background information and history of the Planning Commission's efforts to create a responsive public engagement process using a number of communication methods. He noted there were two points of discussion before the Planning Commission regarding communication about proposed changes to the zoning districts in Stevenson:

1. Should the public involvement strategies be expanded to include an all-community Open House?

Conceptually, the Open House would be held at the Hegewald Center. The format would involve a staff preamble explaining the why, what, how questions underlying the potential zoning changes followed by break-out exercises for the public to provide guidance on specific topics (e.g., location, affordability, transportation corridors/utility services, building design, etc.)

2: Is a follow-up, all-community Town Hall appropriate to satisfy the public's need for engagement on this topic?

Conceptually, the Town Hall would also be held at the Hegewald Center. The format would involve a staff listing of potential actions gleaned from the Open House, followed by round-robin opportunities for verbal testimony and written comment sheets.

D. Discussion

The Commissioners then held an active discussion regarding what they envisioned for the structure and agenda of the Open House and/or Town Hall gatherings. Introductions of the topics by staff with information and descriptions, breakout sessions, dot voting exercises, sample street-scapes and Q/A opportunities for public input were considered. Information gathered would then be used to reflect the public input at a follow up meeting as a way to determine if comments received were interpreted correctly. It was agreed a more formal facilitated meeting would be best. **Commissioner Breckel** maintained it would be beneficial to clearly state all the reasons why the Planning Commission started down the rezone path in order to quell rumors and misinformation. He said he would like to see a joint Planning Commission and City Council endeavor regarding how to best engage the public.

All Commissioners were in favor of the expanded communication opportunities provided through an open house. **PC Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** stated it would be easier to explain the R3 rezone, as the maps were hard to follow. **Commissioner Beck** asked to have all stakeholders invited, not just residents. He received confirmation from Shumaker there was no time limit, and grant extensions were being worked on. **Commissioners Ray and Zettler** echoed the positive response, with **Commissioner Zettler** stating it would be good to have all voices heard, as some people think they are not being listened to.

At 6:27 p.m. **Planning Commission Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** opened the meeting to public comments. Following is a summary of the comments received:

- >Rick May suggested the Planning Commission members review information in the Johnson Economic Report and the recently completed Skamania County Housing Needs Analysis for guidance regarding affordable housing.
- >Phil Crawford advocated for a more 'citizen-centric' approach to city government. He agreed with getting all stakeholders involved, noting it would be hard work but doable. He complimented **Community Development Director Shumaker** on the work he has done to get the word out regarding the zoning proposals.
- >Tracy Gratto agreed **Shumaker** has done tremendous work. She repeated her offer to help with organizing neighborhood meetings. Following a question from **Shumaker** she provided details on what she meant by creative engagement.
- >Brian McNamara recalled the recent moratorium on building in the downtown area galvanized many property owners and other stakeholders. He stated there will be a battle over affordable housing as there is limited buildable space in the area. He requested written meeting minutes be posted in a more timely manner and possibly printed in the local newspaper. **Commissioner Zettler** noted it was possible to put the audio recordings of meetings on the city website.
- >Julie May suggested there be time provided for residents and others to offer city staff ideas on public outreach and engagement and suggested the city invite people to offer specific input and feedback.
- >Mary Repar requested further discussions on affordable/workforce housing, with a focus on more inclusion, rather than separation, of subsidized housing units within neighborhoods. She stated she hears from residents they do not want more cars or traffic.
- >Kelly O'Malley McKee with the Stevenson Downtown Association shared that many local restaurants are having trouble re-hiring employees, and affordable housing is an issue.
- >Rick May spoke about enterprise zones and encouraging business investment in affordable housing.
- >Pat Rice suggested streamlining services in order to make building easier, and to look at what can be done within the current zoning districts rather than changing them. He called for active listening on the part of city staff, and more succinct communication to convey specific messages.
- >Phil Crawford offered it may be the time to initiate a small task force to work on communication and outreach.

Community Development Director Shumaker briefly reviewed the comments, noting none spoke of holding open houses, and questioned if there would be support for any. **Commissioner Breckel** then pointed out there were broad issues raised, with outreach only one of many topics. He suggested organizing and structuring public forums where opinions can be expressed safely and comfortably, adding the effort would provide dividends. Landlords, financial institutions and developers need to be a part of the decision making. He advised changes will take place and it would be best to think things through rather than just observe.

Commissioner Beck asked about updating the Stevenson Comprehensive Plan. The last revision was in 2013. There is no legal requirement to review the entire plan on a set schedule, but changes can be made through the two-year amendment cycles. **Commissioners Ray and Zettler** also expressed interest in examining the Comprehensive Plan, with **Commissioner Zettler** commenting the plan gives concept to future directions and decisions and should stay current. **Commissioner Beck** recommended the proposed extensive outreach efforts should be included as a part of any Comprehensive Plan discussion.

Additional comments were received regarding positive community interest in holding open house style public meetings with Planning Commission and City Council members in attendance; suggestions on zoning density, and a request to have a more rapid response process for some issues.

Commissioner Breckel agreed to work with **Community Development Director Shumaker** in forming a sub-committee, participate in meetings and provide a report about public outreach strategies to the Planning Commission at the June 2021 PC meeting.

5. Staff & Commission Reports: ICMA Fellowship (Parking Intern); Public Tree Preservation Plan, Columbia Realignment Project

- **Community Development Director Shumaker** shared that interviews are scheduled with intern applicants for the city parking analysis, with the intent to have them start in mid-June.
- The DNR funded Tree Management Plan is underway, with an inventory and assessment of tree values and conditions a goal. Maintenance, preservation and management methods are also being established.
- The Columbia Realignment Project has received funding for further studies. There will be a more thorough look for contamination, with remediation performed if found. The purpose is to get the area back into productive use and includes some support for additional parking analysis/evaluation of fee-in-lieu programs

6. Thought of the Month: None

E. Adjournment

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:40 p.m. by **Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel**.

Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe