

October 2020 Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, October 12, 2020 6:00 PM

Held Remotely. Conference Call Info: (253) 215-8782 or (312) 626-6799 and PIN 834 8226 9900.

Online: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/834 8226 9900](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83482269900)

Attending

- Planning Commission members PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Mike Beck, Jeff Breckel, Auguste Zettler, David Ray
- City Staff: Stevenson Community Development Director Ben Shumaker
- Public attendees: Mary Repar, Brian McKenzie

PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations: Chair Selects Public Comment Option for Meeting

Stevenson Community Development Director Ben Shumaker shared information for participants on how to provide comments and mute/unmute their phones or microphones.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel asked participants to limit their comments to 3 minutes or less due to the length of the agenda and packet.

2. Minutes: September 14th, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION to accept minutes as presented made by **Commissioner Beck** with a second by **Commissioner Breckel**.

- Voting aye: Commissioners **PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Mike Beck, Jeff Breckel, Auguste Zettler, David Ray**
- Voting no: None.

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

>Mary Repar offered comments on several items. She discussed the importance of public housing and the stigma associated with living there. She asked if public housing could be made more communal and advocated to remain small rather than focusing on growth.

B. New Business

4. Conditional Use Permit Reviews: Reviewing Past Permits (including those issued between 2018 & 2019)

Shumaker advised the Commission that CUP reviews always take place at October Planning Commission meetings during even numbered years. He asked the Commission to review the mural on NAPA building, noting it was in compliance with the conditions required. He also pointed out that due to zoning code amendments made a similar mural now would not require a CUP.

He asked the Commission to conclude whether they should continue looking further into the mural. **Commissioner Beck** asked if there was a way to morph the mural's CUP into the new, updated permit process for murals and artwork to avoid periodic review. Shumaker stated he was trying to determine if it was possible, and did not think it was a problem. **Commissioner Ray** asked if the mural artwork itself could be changed. **Shumaker** explained the Commission has the ability to change conditions re a CUP. Does the Commission want to re-advertise and

discuss content of the sign at a public hearing? **Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** called for a thumbs up/down consensus opinion regarding further review of the mural. 4 thumbs up were noted opposing further review, with one thumb up supporting further review.

C. Old Business

5. Housing Needs Analysis: Stevenson-specific information

Shumaker shared Stevenson-specific information regarding housing needs as a continuation of the discussion from the September 2020 PC meeting. It had been collected for downtown plan. It included a housing market analysis and commercial and hospitality market analysis. He explained the analysis showed differences in how housing was forecast. One used a high projection estimate prepared by the state, and a second presented a mid-level projection using proprietary data. The Commissioners expressed appreciation for the additional data.

Commissioner Beck observed it clearly showed the general trend and need.

Commissioner Zettler commented the data was from 2019 and noted residential and commercial needs had already changed due to more people working from home in response to Covid-19. **Commissioner Breckel** remarked a 20-year outlook was too long and likely inaccurate. He spoke on the tremendous demand for rental properties and suggested again talking with developers and setting aside land for rentals.

Much of the remaining discussion focused on future growth and the numerous factors affecting it-Covid-19, the potential for recession, working from home, climate driven population shifts from urban areas, increasing insurance costs, current zoning, developer access to capital, infrastructure and utility connection costs, short plat vs subdivision restrictions and fees, length of time for approvals, etc.

Shumaker noted a staff update had been deleted accidentally from the packet. He shared it contained a basic analysis of what changes could be achieved through zoning revisions presently under PC discussion. One further barrier considered was rentals do not appear to support enough of a profit margin or ROI for older developers seeking retirement. Equalizing fees for short plats vs subdivisions has resulted in one instance of additional land division.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel opened the meeting for public comment at 6:25.

>Brian McKenzie provided his experiences, ideas and suggestions to increase development. He stated it all came down to costs. He advocated for a streamlined process and financial incentives to developers.

>Mary Repar suggested reviewing how many LLC's and individuals own residences that could be rented out. She did not favor streamlining and called for the Commission to act as brakes on development to slow costs such as water rates and the WWTP.

Commissioner Beck agreed more flexibility and the development of a suite of incentives could be beneficial. Other issues were discussed, including lender financing and state legislation that prevents the City from pre-planning and pre-clearing developments through the SEPA process. Skamania County is a partial planning county and can't enact some incentive programs. **Commissioner Breckel** suggested bringing together builders, lenders, elected officials, public works and planning groups to figure out a way to work at addressing needs. **Shumaker** advised the housing data provided was useful to present to lenders.

6. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: R3 Text Amendment & Preliminary Map Changes

Shumaker provided background information on the results of a recent questionnaire on proposed zoning code amendments sent to affected/interested property owners. The following topics were addressed: Allowing more senior care housing, including adult family care homes, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities in R3; increase # of units permitted to be built on lots in R3; require development in R3 to connect to the City sewer system; allow development on more portions of a lot (increasing dimensional flexibility), and if allowed, amend driveway standards to avoid street and sidewalk blockage. He shared the public responses pro/con for each topic. 33 respondents answered the survey. Following an extensive discussion, the Commission responded to each question using a thumbs up/thumbs down consensus process.

- **Question 1** would continue allowing adult family homes in R3, and move nursing homes and assisted living facilities from conditional use status to permitted. Four commissioners did not support the change, one did.
- **Question 2** included a proposed change allowing more housing units to be built on a lot in R3. The change would reduce the initial 4,000 sf threshold requirement for construction of a dwelling to 2,000 sf. In doing so it would permit an additional unit on most lots. All commissioners indicated support.
- **Question 3** concerned requiring new construction in R3 district to connect with the public sewer system. All commissioners indicated support.
- **Question 4** addressed allowing development on more portions of a lot in R3. It would reduce the front yard setback from 15' to 10' and eliminate maximum coverage of a lot. This question generated further discussion on safety concerns due to potential garage siting and line of sight.

Shumaker suggested Public Works standards may cover the driveway requirement.

Commissioner Ray moved to have the issue considered at the November 2020 PC meeting. **Commissioner Breckel** confirmed there would still be a 20' driveway length requirement, but it was explained with a smaller setback there may be increased likelihood of not seeing someone on the sidewalk. The Commission will review the topic in November.

- **Question 5** addressed driveway length to reduce vehicle overhang onto sidewalks or curbing. All commissioners were in favor.

Shumaker asked the Commission if he should engage property owners in R2 district in conversations regarding the decisions made that evening, and it was decided to wait until all the issues were completed.

Commissioners then held a discussion regarding how sections of the current zoning map conflict with the comprehensive plan. A discussion was put to nine affected property owners in the C1 Commercial and R3 Multi-Family Residential districts regarding shifting their properties' zoning to align with the comprehensive plan. One property owner was not supportive of the change. It was proposed to change the zoning district for the four properties not opposed and maintain current zoning for the one property opposed. Increased taxes were cited as a concern due to possible rezoning. No immediate increase was forecast via the county assessor, but increased sales in C1 could change that. **Shumaker** asked the Commission to keep in mind the concerns cited when it comes time to discuss changes for properties in the R2 district.

Commissioner Ray stated he did not have the packet under discussion, and he was friends with one of the affected property owners. **Shumaker** noted the issue was a legislative one and was not subject to disclosure of any biases.

Commissioner Beck expressed concerns over the perception that preferential or spot zoning may arise through consideration of the opinions of individual property owners. The comprehensive map should provide direction. He advised not having a property owner's desire sway decisions. **Commissioner Ray** offered to recuse himself. It was determined it was unnecessary as no vote would be taken that night affecting the issue.

Shumaker noted lastly one property currently split into two zoning districts requested having the property be zoned under one district. The re-zone was in alignment with the comprehensive zoning map. He informed the Commission it would be taking action at a later date to address a number of changes.

7. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: Reviewing C1 Parking Text Amendment Policy Questions & Public Engagement Efforts

Shumaker next shared information on his efforts to attain public involvement in decisions regarding parking in C1 Downtown with recommendations arising from the downtown Plan for Success. He pointed to pages 68-70 in the packet regarding proposed and recommended changes specific to different uses.

Shumaker asked the Commission for guidance. He provided examples of the complicated details in the parking regulations and asked for suggestions on how to offer information to gain feedback while not promoting a topic.

>Mary Repar commented that parking became an issue 5 yrs ago, and you can't please everyone. She did not advocate limiting parking but suggested instead making downtown attractive so people will come.

Commissioner Beck suggested a simple, open-ended survey on parking. He related large cities have done away with parking requirements. He noted it can reduce costs and streamline applications. Commissioner Breckel agreed with soliciting simple comments. **Shumaker** noted he would ask the downtown planning steering committee for their ideas based on the Commission discussion.

D. Discussion

8. Staff & Commission Reports:

City Development Director Shumaker highlighted the Stevenson Downtown Business Association's program on business facade renewal and improvement. He also shared information on the recent sewer and WWTP grants received by Stevenson. Additional funding sources are being approached. He noted additional sewer lines are needed and funding will provide for that. A brief discussion was held regarding November and December meetings. It was decided to keep the meeting schedule as is.

9. Thought of the Month: Air Quality **Shumaker** related the terrible air quality experienced recently.

E. Adjournment PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel declared the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe