

MINUTES

Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting Monday, February 08, 2021

6:00 PM

Held remotely: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89884084279>

Conference Call: +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 ID #: 898 8408 4279

Attending: **Planning Commission Vice Chair Auguste Zettler; Commissioners Jeff Breckel, Davy Ray and Mike Beck.**

Absent: **Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel was not in attendance.**

City Staff: **Community Development Director Ben Shumaker**

Public Attendees: Dave Cox, Mary Repar, Phillip Watness, Brian Adams, Brian McNamara, Tabitha Wiggins, Dawn Nielsen, Paul Hendricks, Doug Miller, Xochil Springer, John Mobley, Kelly O'Malley-McKee, Judith Morrison, Shawn Van Pelt, Julie Fitzpatrick-May and several unidentified individuals.

Vice chair Auguste Zettler called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment

Expectations: **Vice Chair Zettler** provided an explanation on using the webinar tools for comments. Tools: *6 to raise hand & *9 to unmute.

2. Minutes: January 11th, 2021 Meeting Minutes

MOTION to approve minutes from January 11th, 2021 Planning Commission meeting as presented was made by **Commissioner Beck** with a second provided by **Commissioner Breckel**.

- Voting aye: **Commissioners Breckel, Ray, Beck and Zettler**
- Voting nay: None

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

Mary Repar spoke about Skamania County Economic Development Council's housing needs analysis. She expressed concerns over the high cost of local housing and called for a cost/benefit analysis to be performed comparing residential to commercial values. She provided a link to a story about Jackson Hole, WY. She described her volunteer work with the local housing shelter and noted the homeless population using the service were Skamania County residents. **Community Development Director Shumaker** responded with information that the Housing Needs Assessment incorporates the number and type of units.

B. New Business

There was no new business presented.

C. Old Business

4. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: Downtown Parking Reductions

Shumaker reported the January 2021 City Council meeting included a discussion regarding Commissioner Beck's status report with Kelly O'Malley McKee and the Downtown Business Association. There will be a public hearing on the proposed ordinance amending parking at the March 2021 City Council meeting. Incentives for parking in mixed use development areas in the C1 (downtown) zone will be discussed.

He provided background information on the potential parking changes, and described outreach efforts to business and property owners in the downtown area. He explained the rationale and noted a number of the proposed changes were related to the surge in outdoor dining due to Covid-19 safeguards. He pointed to public comments in the meeting packet on the issue for Commission consideration.

Commission member discussion included:

Commissioner Beck thanked **Shumaker** for the revisions, noting the amount of work that went into them. He advocated for a 'light touch' to parking regulations, suggesting that market forces would help determine parking needs. He recognized the need for some guidance, as evidenced by the concerns outlined by a local dental clinic.

Commissioner Breckel agreed the revisions were a good start but was interested in seeing more content.

Commissioner Ray asked if the new hotel opening in downtown Stevenson was taken into consideration, and was informed that no additional parking was required because less than 10% of the building's existing square footage had been added.

Vice Chair Zettler appreciated the streamlined revisions. He pointed out the 'nuts and bolts' of in-depth details will need to be worked out. He also noted lack of a public parking area contributes pressure on street parking.

Community Development Director Shumaker remarked an inventory of off street parking will be useful to determine further needs.

Vice Chair Zettler then opened the meeting to take public comments.

>Tabitha Wiggins with Walking Man asked the Commission to reconsider how parking requirements are currently based on total square footage of buildings. Buildings with a lot of storage area need to provide parking spaces despite no retail traffic pressure from an increase in customers. Providing a covered seating area changes requirements as well, even with no additional seating capacity.

>Mary Repar suggested there may be just a perception of a parking problem-the problem is people do not want to walk.

>John Mobley asked about parking for RV's and recommended a sign on First St. directing RV drivers to parking sites. He also asked the Commission to exclude storage and non-retail space from determining parking slots. He requested setting time limits to stop people parking all day on the side streets. A final issue he asked about concerned mixed residential and commercial usage, noting noise from late night activities (bands, etc.) could become a problem.

>Judith Morrison agreed mixed use issues affects parking, and pointed out overnight/long term residential parking affects commercial activities. She supported limited parking times, especially on Russell Street.

>Shawn Van Pelt commented the parking dilemma has been before the City for over 22 years. He stated current parking requirements have been a barrier to new development, and remarked the only way to avoid parking requirements is to re-purpose an old building.

>Brian Adams stated he concurs with most of the previous comments. He asked questions regarding the differences between west and east side property, and was informed it had to do with the historic platting of the different sections. West of Seymour Street is not platted.

>Terese Stacy spoke about the lots behind the Manor Apts. She relayed with no parking on 2nd St. in the evening people walk through her lot and leave trash. She asked to have business needs addressed.

>Tabitha Wiggins spoke again, agreeing with several previous commenters that residential usage affects commercial. She suggested annual parking permits for residents living in the downtown area.

Commissioner Breckel stated he appreciated the public input and advised their details should be integrated into any new strategies to make it work. He called for a balance in order to avoid overburdening residents and business owners.

Commissioner Ray spoke about the importance of anticipating growth for planning purposes.

[Note: after the meeting Commissioner Ray provided the following additional perspective: Given the continuum of regulatory measures we could adopt regarding downtown parking; the low end being minimal and the upper end addressing every exception, I feel it important to point out that absent a major effort to change or add to downtown parking we are dealing with a finite resource. In that regard I would counsel adopting the minimalist perspective until and unless we do something different. I suggest that expediting the Columbia Street realignment would help us address many of those issues.

If we begin making parking exceptions I feel we will box ourselves into a corner and create more problems than we can solve.]

Commissioner Beck also thanked the commenters and shared many large cities have completely done away with parking standards. He encouraged the use of economic incentives to guide parking usage. **Shumaker** stated more time for public input was important so final revisions would likely be presented after March 2021.

Shumaker noted control of street parking has not been discussed by the City, mostly due to questions of enforcement. He advised keeping the issue before the City Council. **Shumaker** informed Commissioners a request for proposals to conduct a traffic study are coming up. It will help direct improvements needed based on traffic patterns.

It was determined three areas of concern were raised from the evening's comments:

- Review the impact of Covid-19 on eating establishments and their use of expanded exterior seating as it affected parking requirements;
- Modify parking requirements for health care and dental offices to align parking needs with patient area, also review net retail sales areas for similar purposes;
- Refine the incentives for mixed-use commercial/residential development.

Shumaker received consensus from the Commissioners on the above issues and will develop draft language to support the proposals.

>Tabitha Wiggins spoke again and asked the Commission to also consider parking requirements that change when an outdoor seating area becomes covered through a pavilion structure. It was discussed that pavilions are different than simple umbrellas and longer use duration could lead to more parking needs. **Vice Chair Zettler** offered the parking ratios under discussion may address the issue.

> Brian Adams asked to have parking ratios be the same for all lots in the downtown area. **Commissioner Beck** recommended striking the provision that addresses parking for un-platted parcels larger than 10,000 sq. ft.

5. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: Potential Map Change Expanding R3 Area

Community Development Director Shumaker then informed the Commission about ongoing Planning Department work concerning potential increases to residential building capacity in the R2 and Core area R1 zones. He described the two main policy changes being considered:

- 1) Should more than 2 housing units be allowed on properties in these areas?
- 2) Should properties in these areas have the same development options as properties in the R3 zone?

Multiple opportunities for public involvement have been provided to property owners about their views on the issue.

6. Planning Commission Bylaws: Amendment (2nd Review)

Commissioners agreed the changes proposed were minor and non-controversial. There was no further discussion.

MOTION to approve Planning Commission Bylaws with amendments as presented made by **Commissioner Beck** with a second by **Commissioner Breckel**.

- Voting aye: **Commissioners Ray, Zettler, Breckel and Beck.**
- Voting nay: None

D. Discussion

Shumaker reported the proposed vacation of roads near Iman Cemetery has been met with push back from stakeholders. Further discussion will take place at the public hearing scheduled for March 16th.

7. Thought of the Month: Urban Reserve. **Shumaker** briefed Commissioners on the concept and definition of urban reserves from the Comprehensive Plan. Context was provided related to past implementation and Commissioners were asked to incorporate the concept into their review of future Planning Commission decisions.

E. Adjournment

Vice Chair Auguste Zettler adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.