

MINUTES
April 2021 Planning Commission Meeting
Monday, April 12, 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/88265425672>

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

Public attendees: Karen Rutledge, Phil Crawford, Mary Repar, Annie McHale, Rick May, Pat Rice, Kim Salveson, Tracy Grotto, Julie Fitzpatrick-May, Art Yeoman, David Wyatt, Caryl McMains, David Cox, Kim Stafford, Dawn Nielsen, Kent Nielsen, Kelly McKee and several unidentified participants.

Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel opened the meeting at 6:02 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 asked how Stevenson wanted to be seen as a community. She spoke about BnB's, summer residences and weekend houses and how much tax was collected from these part-time residences. She noted she has seen increasing numbers of gated housing. She asked the Commission when they were going to address the issue of affordable housing as it relates to the city's work plan. She commented the lack of affordable housing is a concern throughout the U.S.

B. New Business

3. b. Short Plat Review: SP2021-01 McMains Short Plat Planning Commission Optional Review

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker summarized the Short Plat Review. The City of Stevenson Planning Department received a short plat application for a lot along Ryan Allen Road north of Lakeview Street. The tax lot number for the property is 02-07-02-1-0-0300. The property address is 47 SW Ryan Allen Road and is developed with a single-family detached dwelling in the SR Suburban Residential District.

Per the city code, the Planning Commission is to be notified and given the opportunity to review the application. The proposal involves division of one ~1.8 acre property into 2 lots of ~0.81 acres and ~0.95 acres in area.

Shumaker recommended the Planning Commission bypass its review of the short plat and entrust the decision on the application to the Short Plat Administrator. Plans with 4 lots or less can be reviewed through this process.

The Planning Commission agreed through consensus to allow city staff to make the decision on the Short Plat review SP2021-01.

C. Old Business

4. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: Potential Text Change and Map Amendment-New R2 Standards, Expanding R2 & R3 Areas.

Community Development Director Shumaker provided background information on the proposed text amendments and map changes. Changes allowing additional construction on all properties currently zoned R2 and a subset of properties currently zoned R1 are being considered. At its March 2021 regular meeting, the Planning Commission requested modifications to the previous concept of expanding the R3 zone. The draft policy presented in the meeting packet for review was in response to the Commission's and community's concerns. The modifications were presented for the Commission's review. **Shumaker** noted there were no decision points to be reached at the meeting, just more discussion on the proposed text and map amendments.

Shumaker summarized proposed items in the draft which provided greater flexibility for owners of R2 property. These were decreasing the minimum lot size, allowing a greater number of units per acre, eliminating maximum lot coverage limitations, allowing 4-plexes and 3-plexes and decreasing front setbacks. Areas providing greater regulation included prohibiting the use of new septic systems and limitation of structures near driveway.

He described the outreach process used to solicit input. A website (ci.stevenson.wa.us/letsbuild/) provided information and gathered public comments on the proposed amendments; hard copies of letters with maps were mailed to owners of all tax parcels in the R2 District and R1 Core Area; city staff attended a neighborhood meeting to provide background information and hear concerns; and emails related to the April 12th, 2021 Planning Commission meeting were sent to those known by City staff to own property or have an interest in the area.

PC Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel asked about notes from conversations Shumaker had with property owners along Frank Johns Road. He responded that the property owners kept the notes, and the discussion involved explaining the specifics of the draft and listening to the owners' questions and concerns, including potential traffic increases, changes to city neighborhood characteristics, and difficulty in understanding the amendment language and maps.

>Karen Rutledge asked where is this information coming from and explained difficulty finding own property on maps.

Commissioner Breckel stated it was important to go through the current Zoning Map to identify what would be accomplished. He reflected on anomalies in the maps, with odd shaped bits of land, and zoning districts that don't necessarily reflect the use of the land. He noted access to basic services and neighborhood characteristics was essential to provide for a logical and orderly system of growth outside of the city center. He pointed to the layout of the current sewer system as an example of past haphazard planning.

Commissioner Zettler asked for clarification on the difference between the multiple units for R2 described in page 19 and 21 of the packet. He stated it was unclear whether they were Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) and asked about the 4 units now provided for in the updated draft, noting that would change the neighborhood feel considerably. He commented that more equitable

usage was what he thought the Planning Commission wanted. **Commissioner Ray** agreed with **Commissioner Breckel** regarding the sewer lines, and asked for clarification regarding a comment made in a letter submitted to the Commission.

>Rick May asked how many units could be put on a site. He pointed out there were no changes proposed to the actual number of buildings and density was not increased. He stated the recent Housing Needs Analysis recommended increases in the number of allowable units.

Commissioner Ray asked about plans for connecting Del Ray, and Shumaker advised it was unknown, as the neighborhood itself would have to make decisions.

Commissioner Beck spoke about the updates to the zoning maps, stating they appeared modest in scope and accommodating for future growth and housing affordability. He appreciated the current revisions as a good compromise, and pointed out some changes in R2 were in line with goals in the city's Comprehensive Plan. Section 3.2.2 spoke to 'ensuring adequate land for development of multi-family housing development.'

Middle density is intended to facilitate a range of residential uses. Any actual changes would be driven by the property owners, with expanded density providing potential economic opportunity. He pointed out that changes could occur already, even without the proposed zoning amendments. The City Council should be a part of determining how expansion of the sewer system should be funded.

A further discussion took place on new use of private septic systems and future sewer line expansion. Questions were raised over the prohibition of new septic systems when sewer lines were not available to connect to, and what takes place if an ADU is constructed. **Shumaker** clarified existing septic systems can be used until they fail. Extension of sewer lines in R1 is the issue.

PC Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel expressed reluctance about 'infill' and Shumaker suggested that was possibly a policy discussion for the Planning Commission to consider later.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel then opened the meeting up for public comments.

> Annie McHale stated it was good to have voices heard. She was OK with modest changes, agrees with some, but cannot make certain changes won't happen. She asked about controlling design changes in impacted areas.

>6:56 p.m. Phil Crawford spoke about liking the ability to walk to local stores and services.

Extending services without annexation is bad policy.

>Tracy Grotto. ? Stated she helped organize a neighborhood meeting. She asked for less complex language in letters to homeowners to make it easier to understand and clarification on the public involvement process. She volunteered to help with any additional outreach attempts.

>Rick May commented about the underlying effort to make development easier for affordable housing, calling it a noble goal. Proposed changes look to future and what Stevenson will need for housing. He referred to the recent Housing Needs Assessment and asked why the PC was proposing the changes.

Commissioner Breckel spoke about ensuring a logical growth pattern to avoid erratic service coverage, and noted there was no hurry to make changes.

>Pat Rice asked what is driving this revision? He asked about grant funding and how it defined the deliverables.

Shumaker responded there were housing needs identified and recommendations made in the Housing Needs Assessment. He noted further analysis showed additional housing is needed, or affordability will decrease while rent and utilities will increase.

He described the two main deliverables-the first included the staff report introducing the topic, and the second is the ordinance/regulatory change. He pointed out the community conversation needs to take place prior to any ordinance change and the grant deliverables do not drive the outcome.

>Pat Rice reported people on Del Ray do not want the south side of Del Ray to be R3. He asked why the recent RFP for a traffic study included costing out completion of Del Ray extension. He asked about the community involvement process and the Del Ray neighborhood. He has 5 buildable lots he was ready to build on. He claimed city hall was slowing building by being unresponsive, and related his requests for a habitat biologist were not being met. He suggested some city forms could be resigned to reduce the need to repeat information, and asked for rules regarding utility costs for smaller structures.

>Karen Rutledge thanked the Commission for their work. She stated the documents are hard to understand, and encouraged more public forums. She commented property owners get emotional when their property is seen to be affected by something they don't understand. She suggested additional stakeholders need to be included.

>Phil Crawford Reinforce Tracy's point regarding other stakeholders. Agrees with business development, but livability and quality of life is not being addressed. Study did not include other stakeholders or advocates for them. Some are willing to help with outreach.

> Rick May encouraged more flexibility, and spoke about a local homeowner facing extreme costs to connect to sewer. He stated it would cost 3X the value of the lot to extend the sewer line, and asked about the HNA recommendation regarding alternatives to sewer systems. It was pointed out that section referred to places without public systems, most notably the Carson area.

Shumaker responded to the comments about public involvement, noting the first task the Planning Commission does is set the public strategy. He reiterated the process used for the current zoning amendments, pointing out the questionnaire had places for property owners to express opinions.

Commissioner Breckel concurred it was hard for folks to sit in a PC meeting to talk about issues unless it has direct impact. Most people don't know what their property is zoned, so when changes are proposed suddenly questions arise. He stated hard decisions about the future will need to be made, and getting people interested means having more conversations about new ideas.

Commissioner Zettler maintained change was often hard to visualize. He noted the Comprehensive Plan was set up to guide work ten years in the future. It needs to be rewritten periodically to reflect new needs and conditions.

Commissioner Ray, stating 'we are in business to do the bestest for the mostest', agreed with staying aligned with the comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Beck reminded everyone Covid restrictions made it remarkably difficult to hold meetings to gather public input. The Planning Commission is trying to accommodate the public's request to be more involved. He noted the proposed changes have guidance from the comprehensive plan and HNA and show the potential to accommodate future growth. He agreed

more conversations are needed, and asserted no drastic changes were planned for tonight. He appreciated the staff's efforts to get public input.

>Julie Fitzpatrick-May spoke in favor of more public input and more open communication. She suggested there were better ways to communicate, and noted she had neighbors that did not receive information.

She stated Tracy's comments and offers to help with outreach are appreciated. She asked about having more information for owner-specific questions regarding what can be done with property.

>Phil Crawford sees opportunity for communication, not finger wagging. Neighborhood is all in. Agreed there were tremendous challenges this year.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel briefly reviewed comments and asked if more flexibility was possible. She asked if it would be possible to have more outreach with interactive maps in view of the concerns expressed.

>Rick May, all we want to know is what is your plan?

Community Development Director Shumaker spoke about the different messages he was hearing. He noted some commenters wanted increased flexibility, while others called for more controls and he was struggling to understand how both can occur.

>Rick May offered to give credit where credit is due. He appreciated recent planning work done in the commercial area and parking. Can't make homeowners in areas with no sewers have sewers. Have to answer and deal with concerns rising from change.

>Pat Rice-questions need to be answered before plans are created, who pays for what, when and where. Discussion still is needed regarding changes.

Commissioner Breckel appreciated the honest feedback. He also thanked **Shumaker** for his attempts to involve the public, especially when it's not easy to meet in person. He pointed to the number of people present as an indication of success in reaching people.

Community Development Director Shumaker shared that at the neighborhood meeting organized by Tracy and Phil Crawford it was brought up that public meetings by the city are viewed with suspicion by some, and that some believe decisions are already made. He asked for direction by the Commission in how to move forward.

>Pat Rice asked why not implement a 2020 goal to have city staff meet with neighborhood residents. His neighborhood has ideas on development, but thinks the city doesn't want to meet as the city has its own plan.

Commissioner Zettler agreed questions about why things are being done by the city is a recurring discussion and needs to be kept in mind when presenting changes. There is an expectation to be informed.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel asked **Shumaker** what he needed from the Planning Commission, and he responded that a direction to present a draft public engagement policy would be great.

>Rick May stated the issue is we don't know why.

Commissioner Zettler suggesting going back to basics to explain zones and the changes being proposed, as it is awkward for someone who does not understand the language or the terms.

Commissioner Beck recommended having clarity from the City Council regarding plans to expand or extend the sewer system in the city.

Community Development Director Shumaker summarized the discussion points from the meeting. He and **Commissioner Breckel** will work together on a draft public engagement strategy.

He clarified the use of more laymen's terms would be appropriate. He will get an update from other city staff on sewer plans.

D. Discussion

5. Staff & Commission Reports: ICMA Fellowship (Parking Intern)

Shumaker reported the City has posted a temporary position with the University of Washington in hopes of finding a student to work as an intern. The primary focus will be parking issues, with work done on conducting a gap analysis of existing on and off street parking.

6. Thought of the Month: Community Submission: Zoning Opinion Article

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/04/opinion/affordable-housing-california.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Shumaker explained the article about the City of Berkeley ties zoning to overt racism.

E. Adjournment The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe