

# MINUTES

## Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting Monday, March 08, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82001872319>

Conference Call: +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799ID #: 820 0187 2319

**Attending: Planning Commission Vice-Chair Auguste Zettler, Commissioner Davy Ray, Commissioner Jeff Breckel, Commissioner Mike Beck. Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel was not present.**

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

Public Attendees: Mary Repar, Hannah Joy, Jack Clifton, Kelly McKee, Brian McKenzie, Robert Hume, Jeff Holt, Matthew Rivera, Dawn Neilson, Heena D., Annie McHale, Shawn Van Pelt, Rick May.

**The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Zettler at 6:04 p.m. A quorum was established.**

### A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations: **Vice Chair Zettler** explained the process and tools available to offer public comments: Please raise hand to comment. Individual comments should be limited to 3 minutes. (Tools: \*6 to mute/unmute & \*9 to raise hand.)

>Mary Repar asked if the Planning Commission was able to provide a definition of affordable housing, or was it the City Council's responsibility. She referred to Washington Gorge Action Program's editorial on affordable housing in the Pioneer the week of March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. In response to a question by **Commissioner Ray, Community Development Director Ben Shumaker** reported there is a definition (based on percentage of income spent on housing) provided to inform developers of incentives available to encourage inclusion of affordable housing stock. **Commissioner Zettler** pointed out there is no good definition of affordable housing contained within the Comprehensive Plan and suggested it was something to review. He observed ADU's were recently approved in order to help increase affordable housing stock inventory. Lowering the cost of utility hook-ups was also briefly discussed. **Commissioner Breckel** noted policy makers, developers, financial institutions, real estate professionals, and advocates for the homeless needed to come together to problem solve. Further discussion resulted in all Commissioners agreeing it was a complex issue. They requested to have the topic revisited later.

2. Minutes: January 11th, 2021 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION** to approve January Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as presented was provided by **Commissioner Breckel** with a second provided by **Commissioner Beck**.

- Voting aye: **Commissioner Breckel, Beck, Ray and Zettler**

### B. New Business

No new business was presented.

### C. Old Business

### 3. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity: C1 Parking Text Amendment: Draft Ordinance & Public Engagement Efforts

**Community Development Director Shumaker** briefly explained the packet materials for Commission members. He noted there were 8 decision points for guidance. Two written comments were received regarding the proposed changes to parking. The draft ordinance included could be sent on to the City Council for final approval with any additional recommendations made by the Planning Commission during the meeting.

**Shumaker** highlighted the second staff report that summarized the outreach efforts made by city staff to engage the public in the parking issue.

He pointed to the matrix on page 9 as a way to help understand the parking programs and described a number of the recent changes made as requested by the Planning Commission. One remaining question had to do with allowances made for outdoor seating during COVID-19 restrictions, and if the changes should be permanent or temporary.

**Vice-Chair Zettler** then asked for public comments. He provided information on how to use the tools to join the remote meeting, and requested any comments be brief. No comments were received at that time.

**Commissioner Beck** shared his appreciation for having Planning Commission comments included, and **Commissioner Zettler** welcomed the graphics.

**Shumaker** responded to a comment regarding the new hotel in Stevenson on Russell Street. He explained it was not 'shoehorned in' under current parking exemptions, as there was no change of use.

Commissioners engaged in an extensive discussion regarding the proposed parking changes. All agreed fewer restrictions were preferred in order to help create a more vital and vibrant downtown area. Without parking, visitors are likely to drive on through and not stop.

**Commissioner Breckel** spoke of balancing the need for commercial development and visitor parking while being more 'resident friendly', and backed a possible fee-in-lieu system. Changes of use were considered in determining parking needs. **Commissioner Zettler** noted offsetting congestion was important, but without a city owned lot it is difficult to get buy in from businesses and residents. Having every business owner provide onsite parking was deemed impractical. Several Commissioners agreed time limits on parking was another way to help address the situation, but acknowledged parking time limits were currently unenforceable. Questions regarding the use of Columbia Street for additional parking after the realignment project were raised. **Commissioner Ray** recalled White Salmon had tried back-in diagonal parking without much success.

>Rick May provided comments to the Planning Commission. He thanked them for their work, and suggested the City purchase a lot to use for parking.

An additional discussion on COVID-19 safeguards and their affect on outdoor seating and subsequent parking needs for restaurants ensued. That discussion and the prior one resulted in the Planning Commission opting to submit several recommendations to the City Council, with a preface indicating they were interim steps as they anticipated further work on the issue. Points agreed to included:

- Have the City Council initiate flexible provisions for businesses and expanding the options to include all emergencies.
- If outdoor service areas put in during emergencies remain in place after the emergency is passed, ensure parking requirements in place prior to the situation will remain.
- Reduce parking requirements by removing administrative offices in professional buildings/clinics to lower net square footage of active usage used to calculate parking spaces (from 150' sq. to 200' sq).

**Motion** to approve the parking plan with the proposed changes was made by **Commissioner Beck** with a second by **Commissioner Breckel**. Prior to the vote **Commissioner Zettler** reiterated the Planning Commission was sending the proposed changes to the City Council as a draft, and the Council would be the ones to formally adopt.

- Voting aye: **Commissioner Breckel, Beck and Zettler**. **Commissioner Ray** did not vote, stating he preferred to remain neutral.

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

**Community Development Director Shumaker** provided background information on the items contained in the meeting packet, and described sections in the draft map. The purpose of the discussion is to begin assessing possible expansion of the R3 zone. No final decisions will be made during tonight's meeting.

He briefly described the 7 points the Planning Commission would be considering, and noted there was not a lot of support from property owners as indicated through survey responses. Their concerns centered on potential negative changes in neighborhood characteristics due to increased housing density.

Commissioners reviewed the proposed revisions within the residential zones. Questions were asked if and/or how increasing density by zoning changes would impact affordable housing. Being responsive to the concerns of existing property owners was seen as essential. Having a logical progression of zoning regulations rather than the mismatches highlighted was also discussed.

Commissioners agreed the recent approval of Accessory Dwelling Units had increased the capacity of Stevenson to add new dwellings. **Commissioner Beck** pointed out even with the expanded capacity few new secondary units were being constructed. He supported removing the need for an owner to occupy one of the homes in the R1 area. He stated he was in favor of simpler zoning rather than adding a new residential zone. **Commissioner Breckel** advised caution in opening up growth in areas that don't have the services, utilities and infrastructure to support, and noted the Planning Commission needed to be careful in offering flexibility.

>Mary Repar asked for more information from the community prior to any decisions. She asked about ADU's and what they were being used for-additional housing or additional income? She stated the rural nature of the community is important.

> Rick May offered comments as well on housing. He suggested additional affordable housing could be encouraged by lowering the cost of development and not by zoning changes. He also addressed the fears of property owners regarding changing the nature of neighborhoods.

>Annie McHale, a Stevenson City Councilor, shared her concerns about affordable housing, and advised the Planning Commission to be extra cautious in zoning changes, as it was misleading to have people think affordable housing will be a result.

**Commissioner Beck** provided a quick clarification, noting he possibly misspoke about affordable housing and zoning changes. He explained the flexibility would allow more opportunity for property owners. He noted in the R2 zone 58% of the properties have one structure, even though two are permitted. **Shumaker** provided information on the costs of utility connections. Water hook-ups cost ~\$7,000, with multi-family connections reduced to 57% of the initial cost. No reduction is available for sewer installations.

**Commissioner Breckel** again called for a broader discussion on affordable housing, with all players included. Use the opportunity to learn what is holding development back. He stated he liked the idea of exploring a new zoning definition that may lead to a replacement or modification of R2. **Commissioner Zettler** suggested further exploring the addition of flexible options to R2 similar to those provided in R1, noting criteria was already established.

**Shumaker** asked for and received permission from the Commissioners to draft possible changes to the R2 zone with their suggestions, and to work on 'rounding out' the odd-shaped boundary lines with input from **Commissioner Breckel**.

All commissioners supported the public outreach methods currently being used by city staff. They agreed using a similar approach and strategy for the Potential Map Change (Expanding R3) could help to maximize public participation and community input. **Commissioner Beck** asked to have any discussion on affordable housing not be included as it is a separate issue.

A brief review of the Iman Cemetery Road and No Name Road vacation petitions was held.

**Commissioner Ray** asked for and received clarification on the petitions. It was decided to hold further discussion at the March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Planning Commission meeting, as time would still allow PC recommendations to the City Council for their March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting.

#### D. Discussion

##### 5. Staff & Commission Reports: Transportation Planning, Hood River Bridge, Dog Mountain Shuttle

**Community Development Director Shumaker** reported the City is seeking an RFQ for a transportation study and plan. He is hoping the study will be able to cost out off-site/off-street parking areas.

##### 6. Thought of the Month:"Zoom Towns"<https://apautah.org/3730-2/>"The Great Real Estate Reset"<https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-great-real-estate-reset-a-data-driven-initiative-to-remake-how-and-what-we-build/>

**Shumaker** explained the essay explores ‘Aspenization’, and the explosive growth of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, expanding on information provided by Mary Repar at a previous meeting. **Commissioner Beck** shared he was working with Kelly O’Malley-O’Keefe on a downtown parking inventory.

**E. Adjournment Vice-Chair Zettler** adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

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