

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Monday, November 11, 2019
6:00 PM

Planning Commission Members Present: Auguste Zettler, Jeff Breckel, Shawn Van Pelt, Mike Beck, Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Chair

Staff Present:

- Leana Kinley, City Administrator
- Ben Shumaker, Stevenson Community Development Director
- Karl Russell, Public Works Director (arrived @ 6:50 p.m.)

Community Members Present: Matthew Knudsen, Brett Johnson, Rick May, Pat Rice, Julie May and others.

Call to order: Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Preliminary Matters

1. Chair Selects Public Comment Option

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel selected public option # 1.

Each speaker will be allowed to speak for three minutes.

2. Minutes: September 9th and September 23rd Meeting Minutes

MOTION to approve minutes from September 9th and September 23, 2019 made by **Breckel**, with **Beck** seconding. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Agenda changes:

A. The appointment of a Vice-Chair was added to the agenda.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel called for nominations. **Auguste Zettler** volunteered to serve as the Planning Commission's Vice-Chair.

MOTION to approve **Zettler as Vice-chair** was made by **Hoy-Rhodehamel**.

The vote to approve **Zettler's** appointment was unanimous.

B. City Community Development Director **Shumaker** requested the agenda be revised to include Planning Commission discussion on options for amending the Stevenson Engineering Standards. He noted the issue was generated as a result of community concerns contained in a letter presented to the Planning Commission. The item was placed prior to **Driveway Standards Update**.

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

No comments were received.

New Business

4. CUP2019-02 @ 6:05pm CUP2019-01: SDA Mural #2

A proposal from the Stevenson Downtown Association for approval to place a mural on the side of the building where Clark and Lewies' Restaurant is located was put off to another time due to no representative of the SDA being in attendance. No further action was taken.

5. Changes to Stevenson Engineering Standards

Shumaker directed the Commission members to a letter submitted from several community members regarding concerns with proposed changes to the Stevenson Engineering Standards. Shumaker noted the specific changes in the standards were intended for driveways, with those changes set to be reviewed later in the PC meeting. Several complaints expressed in the letter were chiefly directed at the current process the City uses to make any standards revisions. As a result, potential changes to the way the Engineering Standards are now revised were presented to the PC for discussion.

Shumaker pointed to a staff report titled Engineering Standard Revisions, which was aimed at addressing sections of the letter. The memo was intended to provide members of the PC an opportunity to read the concerns expressed in the letter and use the information to provide input for changing the process by which codes and standards are amended. **Shumaker** related to members of the Commission and the public audience background history, timelines and a review of past practices used by the City of Stevenson for amending the Engineering Standards.

In regards to the specific change for driveways being considered, **Shumaker** noted the last time those engineering standards had been updated was in January 2016. That change allowed shared driveways for the first time.

Shumaker noted the decision making process can vary on a case-by-case basis. He cited a past example of the City Council in 2016 approving changes to the driveway standards by Council action without PC input as well as times the Council referred proposals for standard changes to the PC for review. He observed the October 2019 City Council discussion was in keeping with the amendment process identified in the standards and past practices and no irregularities had occurred. He agreed that the public review concerns were not unfounded and offered several options to the Planning Commission to consider regarding how changes are made.

Option 1 would maintain the current status with no change recommended;

Option 2 would align the process to be the same as written for zoning code changes, which would include a public hearing and a report from the Planning Commission; and

Option 3 would essentially validate the case-by-case assessment with the City Council referring matters if needed to the Planning Commission and vice-versa.

Rick May spoke briefly about the letter sent to the Planning Commission. He stated the number of signers indicated a strong level of support against the current process used to change the engineering standards and he would hold further comments until later in the meeting.

The Commission members then entered into an extensive discussion regarding the options presented by Shumaker. The consensus was transparency and consistency in decision-making was important, and Option 2 was favored by the Commission members.

Beck expressed support but also concerns that public comments may cause delays in application approval.

Breckel noted with the current system the PC does not have to be involved but often is, based on City Council or City Staff recommendations. He stated he felt there needed to be consistency in the process.

Pat Rice, a resident, briefly presented information regarding recommended procedures Washington counties use for involving public review of proposed code changes.

Rick May commented the current system offers little chance for public input and can lead to uninformed decision making.

Van Pelt and **Hoy-Rhodehamel** asked if option 2 would lead to the Planning Commission being by-passed. **Shumaker** related that each ordinance establishes its own amendment procedures. It was noted the City Engineer would be a key participant in providing expert advice and information regarding engineering standards.

Breckel asked how the change would be presented to the City Council. **Shumaker** stated he would draft a change to Stevenson Engineering Standards Vol. 1, Section 1.15. **Zettler** requested the draft by **Shumaker** be available at the December PC meeting for review prior to it being presented to the City Council.

6. Driveway Standards Update (delayed to allow Public Works Director participation)

Shumaker initiated a discussion on the proposed driveway standard changes. The proposal was motivated by an application from a property owner seeking to build two duplexes on adjacent lots. The existing standards would not allow these duplexes to share a driveway. Because two duplexes = four homes, it no longer met the criteria allowing a shared driveway. Furthermore, each duplex would require independent road maintenance agreements for the driveways the units shared. With just one owner it meant the property owner would have to enter into an agreement with himself. The application is on hold pending a determination.

Shumaker reviewed how Stevenson currently defines requirements for public and private roads based on number of “lots”, while shared driveways are allowed based on the number of “homes”. He noted other inconsistencies in the code need to be clarified and summarized the process. He reminded the Commission the information had been prepared for the October 2019 PC meeting that was subsequently cancelled. He presented a draft ordinance and explained several changes it contained regarding driveway standards.

Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel opened the discussion for public comment.

- Rick May presented a letter signed by a majority of property owners on Del Ray Street conveying misgivings about the proposed driveway changes and the practice in place for allowing public input into standard changes. The letter expressed multiple points of contention including application, interpretations and

enforcement of the International Fire Code as it related to the proposed change in driveway standards and questioned the authority of the City Development Director to allegedly enforce unapproved or non-existent code changes with seeming intent to target specific property owners. A further criticism was made in the letter regarding the presentation of driveway standard changes to the City Council in October 2019 as essentially housekeeping items.

City Administrator Leana Kinley and PWD Russell responded by pointing out existing sections that allow for exemptions for driveways as well as areas where the IFC regulations do not apply. **PWD Russell** stated where applicable the IFC can be used as a guide, and driveway standards are different than fire access requirements. **Administrator Kinley** took exception to the comments regarding alleged unethical behavior by City staff, noting that attacks were not warranted. Further discussion involved defining “driveway” and “driveway approach” and appropriate requirements for driveway width and driveway surface materials. The Commission then returned to the issue of shared driveways and what the distinction is between shared lots and shared homes. **May** added further comments regarding a project he and his neighbors are working on and the impact the proposed changes may have.

The consensus of the Commission was there was too much information presented at the meeting to consider making any further decisions or taking action that evening and agreed to revisit the driveway standard changes at the December 2019 PC meeting. **Shumaker** was complimented by the PC chair for his work in educating the Commission.

Regarding the original question about the two duplexes, **Shumaker** stated that the PC could approve one duplex, and the owner would have to enter into a road maintenance agreement with himself to be in compliance, with the second duplex on hold until a solution is arrived at. **Matthew Knudsen** asked if multi-family housing with 12 units using a shared driveway would be better off with a solid pavement. Commission members reiterated it was important to bring clarity to driveway standards, clarify language and format, and define the difference between a duplex, multiplex and a residential or commercial development.

Old Business

7. Training Subdivision Training, Part 2

Shumaker provided Commission members more information on the definition of plats, what tax parcel numbers mean and how the T-R-S (Township-Range-Section) system came about. He described how the Willamette Stone in Portland, Oregon became a point of reference for the regional grid and how tax parcel numbers identify a properties location in relation to the Willamette Stone.

The intent of the training is to assist the Commission in making sense of the "legal wilderness" as it relates to land use regulation and ways the City might help owners navigate this wilderness. The work would consist of updating confusing land use descriptions and terms to make them more understandable for property owners and city staff.

8. Land Division Code Update

Uniform definitions and a Comparison of Boundary Line Adjustment Regulations

No discussion was held and no action was taken.

Shumaker followed on the previous discussion and suggested starting with property line alteration regulations: plat alterations, plat vacations, boundary line adjustments, and assessor tax parcel segregation. He highlighted areas needing work, pointing out redundant language, different definitions between codes for similar items, different procedures regarding fees, etc. He offered an example of what a new chapter within the code could look like upon completion.

The Commission was asked if they wanted to take on the amendment work and what public engagement strategy they wanted to include. **Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** suggested and the commission agreed to wait on any public input decision until the Commission saw the extent of the changes.

The consensus among Commission members was that inconsistencies among multiple documents need to be addressed to ensure clarity, and changes need to be substantive.

Beck discussed other cities approach of a unified development code which combines short and long plat subdivision regulations with other land use regulations. He suggested letting that approach guide in this process.

9. CUP2018-02

Extending Timeline for Feeley Temporary Emergency, Construction or Repair Residence

Shumaker shared with Commission members the history of the application and project. The request is to extend permission for the applicant to live in a temporary residence while completing his permanent residence. Shumaker recommended the Commission extend the Conditional Use Permit to April 19, 2020.

Decision

Motion to approve the amendment to CUP 2018-02 made by **Beck** with a second by **Zettler**. The vote to approve was unanimous.

10. Staff & Commission Reports

Downtown Plan, Departmental Transitions, Variance Granted

City Planning Director Shumaker introduced Karl Russell as the new Public Works Director.

The City of Stevenson is working to develop a contract with Skamania County for building official services. He asked if anyone began hearing of problems with permitting to alert City staff.

The downtown plan is preparing to draft implementation stages. Additional planning group and Steering Committee meetings are being scheduled.

The Board of Adjustment recently granted a variance regarding how to determine a front yard on a property.

A short plat application will be coming to the PC. The applicant has been asked to make some changes and resubmit for review. The short plat code requires PC be notified.

The biennial comprehensive plan amendment cycle finished as of the end of September 2019. City Administrator Leana Kinley submitted an application asking the Commission to focus on and define capital improvement planning. There is a push from the state to align capital improvement plans for public facilities including streets, sewers, water, housing, parks, criminal justice, etc. The Planning Commission will be tasked with creating an amendment calendar and putting projects before the City Council by April 2020.

A five lot subdivision application will be coming to Planning Commission for recommendations and then go to the City Council.

Zettler reported he attended the presentation on the final report for The Road Map to Washington's Future. The project focused on future growth planning for Washington State. Similar issues facing City of Stevenson are statewide.

11. Thought of the Month

None

12. Adjournment

The meeting was declared adjourned by Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel at 8:05 p.m.