

# June 2021 Stevenson Planning Commission MINUTES

**Monday, June 14, 2021 6:00 PM**

Attendees at City Hall followed current CDC guidance regarding use of masks, social distancing, and attendance.

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

Public attendees: Hannah Joy, Mary Repar, Rick May, Annie McHale, Julie Fitzpatrick-May, Dave Cox, Kelly McKee, Sarah Fuller and other unidentified participants.

**Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

## **A. Preliminary Matters**

### 1. Public Comment:

**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. Individual comments should be limited to 3 minutes. 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: Port's Shoreline Mitigation Project was done as mitigation for work in Rock Creek in 2007. Not a beach, to be used for fish and wildlife rehabilitation and conservation.

>Sarah Fuller asked to have the agendas sent out earlier in order to have time to read it. She was advised the most recent agenda was updated from the original sent out earlier in the week.

### 3. Minutes: May 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION** to approve the minutes from the May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting as presented was made by **Commissioner Beck**, seconded by **Commissioner Zettler**.

Voting aye: **Commissioners Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Auguste Zettler, Davy Ray, Jeff Breckel, Mike Beck.**

## **B. Old Business**

### 4. Zoning Amendment: Increasing Residential Building Capacity Subcommittee Report: Public Involvement

**Commissioner Breckel** provided information and background regarding the subcommittee he is heading. The main focus of the group is developing an effective communication process that routinely promotes positive public engagement and encourages residents, property owners, developers, business owners, renters and others to become aware of and provide their input in topics that come before the Planning Commission. A number of questions remain to be answered-how to effectively reach people and get them interested? How much information should be provided (and in what format), as too much can overwhelm people? How to explain why the Planning Commission is considering certain actions or changes?

He stated being sensitive to the Comprehensive Plan and quality of life issues in ways that take care of current needs and plan for future needs is important. **Commissioner Breckel** highlighted outreach was essential to those who are underserved, who need housing and cannot find it locally. He noted there had been multiple emails and communications between members of the groups with ideas and comments regarding goals and expectations, with a meeting held last week. Now the next step is to organize all the information received into a more specific and focused plan of action. He anticipates workshop and public forums to gather information, process it and develop recommendations, but stressed they would need to be welcoming and inclusive to avoid strong personalities dominating conversations.

**Commissioner Beck** spoke about adding greater definition to the public input process in order to satisfy the community's needs and ensure they are being heard. He envisions the subcommittee coming up with a model public participation process that can be used as a template.

**Commissioner Ray** agreed outreach was important so everyone is connected and communicated with. He thanked **Commissioner Breckel** for his coverage of the issue.

**Commissioner Zettler** stated it seemed to be going in a good direction, and he was all in support of public involvement.

**Planning Commission Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** asked about the outreach efforts to those people working in Stevenson but living elsewhere due to lack of affordable housing. **Breckel** suggested reaching out to property managers and employers as a way to find information.

**Commissioners Breckel and Beck** pointed out where **Community Development Director Shumaker** had successfully used a variety of outreach methods even during the COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings, noting a questionnaire he sent out had generated a lot of public interest. **Commissioner Breckel** said even with those efforts, people would comment they had never heard about an issue, so he sees the need to be more proactive.

**Community Development Director Shumaker** commended the efforts, and highlighted how they could be used to create a decision making model for both the City Council and the Planning Commission either broadly or for individual issues. He expressed interest in seeing the process work initially to address the current zoning situation.

**PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** open the meeting for comments at 6:27 p.m. Following is a summary of the comments received:

>Rick May thanked the Commission members for taking on the issue. He questioned what is driving the need (increasing residential building capacity) and if it would solve or create a problem or opportunity.

>Mary Repar asked several questions on the purpose of the zoning change and advocated for policies to assist with rent control, incentives for landlords, etc.

>Rick May asked about recommendations in the 2020 Housing Needs study and the Johnson report regarding density in R1.

**Commissioner Breckel** agreed zoning is not the sole answer to affordable housing, and asked what developers, financial backers and builders are doing. What role zoning plays in addressing affordable housing is a complex issue.

>Dave Cox commented that landowners may not want to develop their land, and

**Commissioner Breckel** concurred, noting you will not always get development due to economics.

>Mary Repar stated pushback occurs. Just because something is allowed does not mean it will happen.

**City Administrator Leana Kinley** stated the city is not wanting or forcing landowners to do it. She pointed out the process is working, as feedback is being received to the questions being asked.

>Dave Cox spoke about the choices landowners have between keeping large lots or separating and building another house for money.

>Annie McHale commented even if this would go through, it's only offering options.

**Commissioner Breckel** noted that **Community Development Director Shumaker** was working to increase flexibility, and if the increase in residential building capacity was allowed, some people could do it and others won't.

**PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** suggested providing the Housing Needs Analysis online or at the library so people could review it in depth, with a 'Cliff Notes' version prepared to highlight points.

>Rick May complimented Commission members for reading the study and being prepared.

**Commission Zettler** noted the flexibility created in R1 still does not give those in R2 the same opportunity, and questioned why a less developed zone gets more benefits.

## C. New Business

### 5. Planning Commission Work Plan: Scheduling the Remainder of 2021

**Community Development Director Ben Shumaker** pointed to his staff report in the meeting packet. Included were emails/attachments for concepts submitted by the public, the City Council's goals, and the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. He asked Commissioners to review and decide what projects they would want to work on for the remainder of 2021. Some need to be acted on, others are optional.

Projects included: Zoning discussions regarding increasing residential building capacity, the Shoreline Master Plan final review and recommendations, an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, downtown planning, parking evaluations, Columbia Avenue realignment project, conditional use permit reviews, and addressing a petition from residents in the Iman Cemetery area. Public requests to help plan for a new city cemetery site and review the Critical Area Ordinance were also considered.

## D. Discussion

Commissioners held a detailed discussion as they reviewed the project options presented.

>Mary Repar asked about the state of the city's infrastructure. **City Administrator Leana Kinley** responded by sharing information on the city's Water and Sewer System Master Plans and their timelines. A new program tracks plans and upgrades for facilities.

>Rick May asked about upgrades to the sewer system prior to any zoning changes to allow property owners that can't use septic systems to connect to the sewer system. **City Administrator Kinley** explained those who hook-up to the system will have to pay the costs. Questions were raised regarding permits, wetland buffers, setbacks and seasonal streams that fall under the Critical Areas Ordinance.

**Commissioner Beck** observed the work plan shows the Planning Commission has ongoing business to tend to. He suggested using the information in place with common sense, as it will not always be possible to know everything, and waiting for studies is not always manageable. **PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** questioned the reason to charge permit fees for activities such as clearing Himalayan blackberries and asked about waivers.

**Community Development Director Ben Shumaker** explained for an expedited review process, a small fee is charged with the application submitted. The city needs to act within seven days or it is considered approved. He noted the City Council approves the fees.

>Dave Cox asked about permits being used to establish a paper trail and document restoration efforts.

>Rick May stated flexibility was needed in regarding streams and buffers, as there was inconsistency in how setbacks and buffers were being used.

**Community Development Director Ben Shumaker** observed flexibility is in the specific code he had sent to Mr. May.

>Pat Rice expressed concerns he had regarding how the city determines stream setbacks and buffers.

**PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** asked about on-site visits. **Community Development Director Shumaker** explained the city permitting and application process puts the responsibility of having onsite visits by qualified professionals put in the hands of homeowners in order to reduce distrust of city decisions.

**Commissioner Beck** shared that the city did not have the authority or obligation to map every critical area. He opposed revising the Critical Areas Ordinance. He proposed a motion to fill the Planning Commission's calendar with existing/ongoing projects, and to pursue support of Opportunity Zones for Stevenson.

The motion did not receive a second, but **Planning Commission Chair Hoy-Rhodehamel** asked for a show of hands regarding issues proposed for the Planning Commission work calendar. It was agreed to add 2 community suggested projects (Opportunity Zones and Rock Creek Public Access) to the list of Ongoing Planning Commission Projects.

>Dave Cox commended **Community Development Director Shumaker** regarding communication efforts on Owl Creek. **Shumaker** advised the ordinance process allows buffers to be reduced and following what is spelled out in the ordinance is important.

**Commissioner Ray** mentioned climate refuges, and to think about the future.

## 6. Thought of the Month: None

> Mary Repar invited people to a Grange book discussion on living in a society with limited resources.

## 7. Staff & Commission Reports

**Community Development Director Ben Shumaker** provided updates and information on the following items:

- ICMA Fellowship-the parking intern initially hired took another offer. Other options are being considered.
- First Street Overlook-WASDOT has decided to do a different level of design review, and since they acquired the ROW they are going to a higher level of scrutiny. The city is still figuring out that that will mean.
- He advised the Planning Commission can expect a future agenda item on utility services outside city limits, which is another component of annexation and increasing residential building capacity.
- **Commissioner Zettler** asked several questions regarding placement of the sidewalk on the First St. Overlook. **City Administrator Kinley** shared there are geological constraints to building the sidewalk, and when the initial discussion was taking place that information was not available.
- **Commissioner Breckel** spoke about multiple issues overlapping zoning, and is trying to coordinate having someone from the City Council participate in the workgroups.
- **PC Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel** noted it would be helpful to know the reasons why the City Council occasionally overturns Planning Commission decisions.
- **Commissioner Zettler** urged caution on having City Councilmembers participate in Planning Commission work, stating it means integrating different parts of the decision making process. He expressed concern it could be viewed by the public as rubber stamping decisions because they engaged in the decision making process, and then voted on the decision.
- **Commissioner Breckel** pointed out during the downtown planning both the Planning Commission and City Councilmembers participated. He suggested they would be asked only to come to workshops, and also be involved in public outreach.
- **Commissioner Zettler** cautioned transparency is important, and to ensure Commission members and City Councilmembers do not use their positions to influence decisions.
- **City Administrator Kinley** provided a brief update on the traffic study, noting the recording of vehicles does not involve driver ID. There will be a public meeting to share more information.

#### **E. Adjournment**

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:00 p.m. by **Planning Commission Chair Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel**.

**Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe**