



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, at 7:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Chair Cary
Vice Chair Hubbard
Commissioner Webster
Commissioner Semling
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Pugsley
Commissioner Toschi

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Planner Graichen
Associate Planner Dimsho
Community Development Admin Assistant Sullivan
Councilor Birkle

Others: Austen Tanner

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic

There were no topics from the floor.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Planning Commission Minutes Dated January 11, 2022

Motion: Upon Commissioner Webster's motion and Commissioner Toschi's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes dated January 11, 2022. [AYES: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Semling, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Pugsley, Commissioner Toschi; NAYS: None]

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA (times are earliest start time)

B. 7:00 p.m. Site Design Review at 270 Strand Street – Columbia View Park

City Planner Graichen presented the staff report dated February 1, 2022. He mentioned this was the old veneer property in the Riverfront District Mill Subdistrict. It has been a very important piece of land to the City's industrial past. The City has been considering this piece of property for an expansion of downtown for a long time and were finally able to purchase the property in 2015. In 2016, the Waterfront Framework Plan was adopted in conjunction with the zone change.

He said they were discussing the expansion of the Columbia View Park. He said currently it is about an acre and once expanded will be about 1.6 acres. He said the Framework Plan involved a subcommittee that included the Planning Commission. The adoption of the Framework Plan was critical because it laid

out the roadway connection of 1st Street and Plymouth Street, the public access along the waterfront, and other view corridors. The Framework Plan also specifically discusses the expansion of the park.

He said a public park is a permitted use, so the expansion meets the "use requirements" of the zoning district. He said there would be a new stage included, but not part of this decision. It would be presented along with the architectural review of the Building Permit at a later date.

He said there was an extension of Cowlitz Street proposed to create a roundabout and eight on-street parking spots onto the property.

There was a discussion about the proposed roundabout and the parking provided. The Commission discussed if parking spots in the roundabout would be an issue for traffic and visually. Commissioner Toschi was not in favor of parking spaces being included in the roundabout. He had a significant concern about the traffic flow and pedestrian loading zones.

There was a discussion about the playground and the new equipment and the shape of the area.

Commissioner Pugsley asked why they were not reviewing the park area for compliance with the Architectural Guidelines for the Riverfront District but the stage was being reviewed as that. Graichen said it is because the park itself is not a designated landmark designated by our Comprehensive Plan. Also, any future building would be reviewed for compliance with the Architectural Guidelines.

In Favor

Tanner, Austen. Tanner was called to speak. He said he supported the idea of a roundabout. He said he has been to Seaside, Oregon where they have a similar roundabout and even though it was difficult to find parking there, the view and how beautiful it was, made it more likely that he wanted to stay and check it out. He felt that the roundabout proposed would offer that same appeal to visitors.

Neutral

No one spoke in neutral.

In Opposition

No one spoke in opposition.

Rebuttal

There was no rebuttal from the applicant.

End of Oral Testimony

There were no requests to continue the hearing or leave the record open.

Close of Public Hearing & Record

The applicant waived the opportunity to submit final written argument after the close of the record.

Deliberations

Commissioner Toschi said that further consideration should be given to the roundabout before a final decision was made, as he felt this area would be a statement for whole project. He had a concern this would become more of a traffic issue versus pedestrian friendly.

There was more discussion about whether to consider parking in the roundabout. The Commission agreed that they would recommend not to include parking in the roundabout, but make it a loading zone only.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Pugsley's motion and Commissioner Lawrence's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Site Design Review at Columbia View Park with the recommendation of a loading zone only in the roundabout, instead of parking. [Ayes: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Semling, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Toschi, Commissioner Pugsley; Nays: None]

Motion: Upon Commissioner Webster's motion and Commissioner Lawrence's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Chair to sign the Findings when prepared. [Ayes: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Semling, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Toschi, Commissioner Pugsley; Nays: None]

C. 7:20 p.m. Conditional Use Permit at 1370 Columbia Blvd – Tanner

Graichen presented the staff report dated February 1, 2022. He showed on the map where the property was located. He said it was an unusual property surrounded on three sides by developed streets. He mentioned the applicant had already established a small-scale coffee roasting business and would like to legally establish a dwelling unit in the back portion of the building.

Graichen said when this area was established as the Houlton Business District, it was a concern of the Planning Commission at the time that the commercial area would become all residential. At the time, they decided not to allow dwellings on the ground floor at all. With this rule, it created a bunch of non-conforming single-family dwellings which created a risk that one day, they could lose their non-conformity. More recently, the rule was modified to allow dwellings on the ground floor. A dwelling unit on the same level as commercial space is considered a Conditional Use, which is on the ground floor in this case and requires a Conditional Use Permit to be allowed.

He mentioned off-street parking was not an issue as the building was dependent on on-street parking. He also said there was not a lot of room to put a street tree because of overhead power and did not recommend it to be mandatory. He talked about the buffering and screening already in place on the property. He said the exterior door of the dwelling unit had to have screening, but fencing was not allowed in the right-of-way, but trees and landscaping were allowed.

There were some questions about the type of dwelling being proposed and the standards applied to the space.

Tanner, Austen. Applicant. Tanner was called to speak. He said the general idea of the space was to provide a spot for the person roasting coffee to have a place to live. He said there was already a living space inside and there was not a whole lot of work to do to prepare it. He wanted to bring it up to date and make it a legal use for the district it was in. He said the coffee roasting use is not open to the public.

There was a small discussion about the exterior of the building and how it will look when finished.

In Favor

No one spoke in favor.

Neutral

No one spoke in neutral.

In Opposition

No one spoke in opposition.

Rebuttal

There was no rebuttal from the applicant.

End of Oral Testimony

There were no requests to continue the hearing or leave the record open.

Close of Public Hearing & Record

The applicant waived the opportunity to submit final written argument after the close of the record.

Deliberations

The Commission discussed whether a tree was needed. They agreed that it would be a difficult area to add an additional tree in the location proposed.

Commissioner Pugsley mentioned the applicant has a reputation for beautiful properties and had full confidence he would make this building the same. She also said she is the biggest critic of redeveloping the commercial areas into residential uses, but she felt it was within the spirit historically of the Houlton Business District area to have a residential unit in this location, so she was in full support. She also said since he operates the business, he has a vested interest in the property to keep it up to a certain standard.

Commissioner Toschi expressed concern with the area allowing a residential unit in a commercial district. He was concerned at what type of tenancy could or would be allowed in the building. He said there were several things lacking as far as a residence was concerned. He questioned whether it was appropriate to allow a residential unit in such a prominent building for the district. He worried about unsightly outdoor storage which he has seen happens at other residential units in the Houlton Business District.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Pugsley's motion and Commissioner Webster's second, the Planning Commission approved the Conditional Use Permit without the condition of a street tree. [Ayes: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Semling, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Pugsley; Nays: Commissioner Toschi]

Motion: Upon Commissioner Semling's motion and Commissioner Lawrence's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Chair to sign the findings. [Ayes: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Semling, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Toschi, Commissioner Pugsley; Nays: None]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

D. The Historic Landmarks Commission – Guardians of The Plaza

Graichen presented the memo that was included in the packet. He discussed that there were official Historic Resources in the Comprehensive Plan. He said normally they are buildings, but they can be sites, objects and sometimes districts. He said the Courthouse Plaza was one of those sites. He said anytime there is a Designated Landmark and there is a proposed alteration, it is supposed to come before the Historic Landmarks Commission. He discussed examples of what might constitute an "alteration."

He showed the Commission the temporary signs that were placed in The Plaza. He said the footprint was very small, but they have a 12-foot tall visual impact. He asked the Commission if they thought they were considered an alteration. The Commission agreed that they were.

There was a discussion about what or where these should be placed. The Commission also discussed if any signage there would be appropriate.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Lawrence’s motion and Commissioner Toschi’s second, the Planning Commission unanimously concluded that these sign structures constitute an alteration. [AYES: Vice Chair Hubbard, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Pugsley, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Toschi, Commissioner Semling; Nays: None]

E. Strategic Plan/Department Goals Overview

Graichen presented the Planning Department Strategic Goals that he had shared with the City Council. He talked about all the items that the Planning Department was working on and the hierarchy of priorities. He explained all the items from the last six months and how much time it involves. He shared that the typical threshold for a staff planner is every 5,000 population. We are approaching 15,000 people in St. Helens.

He shared the list of projects and their timeline for the department with the Commission. He said there would be some items that would interest them as well as the Historic Landmarks Commission. He talked about creating the Inventory of Historic Resources List, which is a list of potential Historic Landmarks He also discussed this secondary list and the connection to possible grants or grant programs that could help with the restoration of the community.

Commissioner Toschi expressed concern about the Planning Commission needing more resources. He said the list was long and that he wanted to know when another planner would be added to the Planning Department. Councilor Birkle mentioned that raising these issues with the Budget Committee and the City Council would be the appropriate place to discuss this request. Councilor Birkle said several departments were requesting more staff, so it was being weighed based on needs and desires of the citizens and safety of the community.

Chair Cary acknowledged how busy and hard the Planning Department has been working and he mentioned that he has seen the number of hours put in by both parties.

PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISIONS (previously e-mailed to the Commission)

- F. Lot Line Adjustment at 59315 Forest Trail Circle/34739 Sykes Road - Elegant

PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

- I. Planning Department Activity Report – January

Graichen discussed the possible increase to System Development Charges (SDCs) and shared the possible changes in the mix. He showed the differences in SDCs between our City and other comparable cities.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Commissioner Toschi shared that he felt that more meetings between the Planning Commission was necessary and part of their power and duties as a Commission.

The Commission was split in their agreement on if it was necessary to hold additional meetings and whether they wanted to commit to attending them, if they were held. There was a discussion on what was considered needed, but nothing conclusive. There was a discussion about talking about proactive options as an agenda item on next month’s meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned 10:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant