



PLANNING COMMISSION & CITY COUNCIL JOINT MEETING DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 4:00 PM

- Members Present:** Mayor Rick Scholl
Councilor Russ Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Ginny Carlson
Commissioner Charles Castner
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Brooke Sisco
- Members Absent:** Council President Jessica Chilton
Chair Dan Cary
Commissioner David Rosengard
- Staff Present:** City Administrator John Walsh
City Planner Jacob Graichen
Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho
Community Development Admin Assistant Christina Sullivan

This meeting was held in the Council Chambers.

At 4:00 p.m., Mayor Rick Scholl opened the Joint Planning Commission and City Council Meeting. The purpose, rules, and goals of this meeting were explained. The mayor is the presiding officer, the group must have respect for others' time, and no decisions are to be made at these meetings.

DISCUSSION OF VACANT STOREFRONTS

Mayor Scholl did a small recap on the previous discussion and how the two entities agreed they would like to see a thriving Main Street. He said in the discussion they had invited St. Helens Mainstreet to be a part of the discussion.

Erin Salisbury, the President of St. Helens Mainstreet, started the conversation about different ideas that they had to support the infrastructure in the downtown and Main Street corridor. She asked why they thought it was important to fill these vacant storefronts.

Mayor Scholl said he thought it was important for connectivity.

Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker said it was important because the Planning Commission had resolved to become a Proactive Commission and one of the items was to address Vacant Storefronts. She said even though the Commission may have their own agendas, she felt this item was important to the Community. She said she received feedback from the community that this should be addressed and that is what started the discussion.

Councilor Brandon Sundeen said he thought it was important because it gives the vision and appearance of a vibrant and active City.

Commissioner Ginny Carlson said this might help get incentives started to help property owners fill those spaces. She said it might open some partnerships and open affordability to small business owners.

Councilor Russ Hubbard said he would like to see more builders have incentives to restore these buildings. He said there was already a lot of hoops for developers to jump through for building code, so offering an incentive would help offset those expenses.

Commissioner Scott Jacobson said he would like to see an overall business plan for downtown so that there was more fluidity of businesses in the area.

Commissioner Charles Castner said more vibrance and vitality in the business district and a connection between the property owners and the business owners.

Councilor Mark Gunderson said it was important to him to see the unique shops and small businesses in the storefronts.

Commissioner Brooke Sisco said she would like to see them open to show livability and make this an even better place to live.

Salisbury said Mainstreet is a national entity and mentioned there is a need for a vibrant downtown, because it was like the heart of a community. She said it circulates financial and social health throughout the community. She mentioned the Houlton District used to be so lively and she would love to see it restored.

Marci Sanders, Chair of the Economic Vitality Committee, shared some of the first steps to fix the vacant storefronts. She said to have economic vitality in the district, they would need to focus on a comprehensive inventory of the businesses and property owners in the Main Street corridor. She said they had already taken steps to get a list of the businesses and now they are working on the buildings and property owners. She said they would use this database to narrow down the vacant storefronts. She mentioned out of the 158 storefronts there were about 18 that were dormant or vacant in some shape or form. She also shared a study which tried to estimate the lost revenues that vacant storefronts have on a downtown. The impact of vacant storefronts is magnified the more of them a downtown has.

There was a discussion about Mainstreet partnering with the Planning Commission and City Council to either change codes, enforce codes it already has, or finding other tools to educate the public on how to move forward.

There was a discussion on how to form a task force to discuss how to create and provide education and incentives to move forward with assessing the issue of vacant storefronts.

DISCUSSION OF POLICE STATION LOCATION

City Planner Jacob Graichen introduced the architects with Mackenzie Architects that were involved with the design of the Police Station and locations.

City Administrator shared the back story on why these new sites were being considered instead of the Kaster Road location. The City had originally had ten sites, narrowed down by an Adhoc Committee. The City staff and City Council narrowed it down to four new locations as possible places.

Thomas Beckham with Mackenzie Architects was there to share four different sites for the new police station. Beckham said there was a list of criteria they used to narrow down the sites and were prepared to use those again if needed.

Beckham went through each site and shared the different pros and cons as to why they may or may not work for the new police station.

The consensus among all City Council and Planning Commission members was that the location at 18th Street and Columbia Boulevard or the location off Old Portland Road and Port Avenue next to the

Columbia County Sheriff's Office would be better selections than the other two. There was a discussion about retrieving more information on financials that would be involved in helping to narrow down the decision on which one is best.

There was a discussion about the importance of building a new station. All agreed it was an immediate need.

There was a discussion about a meeting with other City Departments, including Engineering and the Police, to determine changes that need to be made to accommodate a new site.

DISCUSSION OF 2024 DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS OVERVIEW

Graichen shared some of the Development Code Amendments that were being discussed with the Planning Commission as potential codes that need modernization and how they had cleaned them up.

He went into detail about the Housing Analysis and some of the changes that will be made. He shared about attached housing, three or more units, units above businesses, single room occupancies, and rules for having residential and non-residential on the same level. He said there would be a special notice about clarification on the amendments to make the citizens aware.

DISCUSSION OF ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

Vice Chair Shoemaker shared that now there was a full Planning Commission, they could move forward in the direction of focusing on Vacant Storefronts.

There was a discussion on how to form a Mainstreet Revitalization Task Force without having a quorum, to do the background research and come back and share with the full groups. Two Councilors, Councilor Gunderson and Councilor Sundeen, were selected to be on the Task Force. Vice Chair Shoemaker said since there are two Commissioners absent, she would discuss with the Planning Commission which three members would be involved and get back to the group with the members.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

*There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*

/s/
Rick Scholl, Mayor

/s/
Dan Cary, Chair