



JOINT PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 6, 2016

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Jon Friedman called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM in the Council Chambers at 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

ROLL CALL:

Planning Commission - Chair Jon Friedman, Vice Chair Richard Weinman, Commissioners, Craig Olson, and Suzanne Skone were present. Commissioners Tiffin Goodman, Jennifer Mechem, Bryan Cairns were absent.

Design Commission - Chair Richard Erwin, Vice Chair Colin Brandt, Commissioners Susanne Foster, Lara Sanderson, Daniel Hubbell, Tami Szerlip were present. Commissioner Hui Tian was absent.

Staff was represented by Scott Greenberg, Development Services Group Director, Alison Van Gorp, Administrative Services Manager and Ombudsman, Shana Restall, Principal Planner, Travis Saunders, Senior Planner and Joe Tovar of Tovar Consulting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Hubble moved approval of the November 21 meeting minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Chair Erwin and passed unanimously, as amended.

Commissioner Brian Cairns arrived at 6:02

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

Additional comments received since the packet was produced were handed out in hard copy to the Commission, in addition to those provided in the packet.

INFORMATION REQUESTS:

Scott Greenberg announced that two consultants have been selected since that last meeting. BERK was selected for the parking analysis, and EcoNorthwest was selected for the economic analysis of the retail frontage standards and the incentives/bonus height requirements.

Commissioner Hui Tian arrived at 6:05

A commissioner inquired about the number of parallel vs. angled parking spaces – Mr. Greenberg clarified that parallel parking provides 30% more spaces.

A commissioner inquired about the funding for the parking study. Scott Greenberg clarified that the Tovar/MAKERS team put together the street sections as a part of their budget.

A commissioner inquired about holding a charrette with the community on the Joint Commission proposal. Mr. Greenberg reminded the commission that a charrette was not included in the work plan

or budget. Further clarification was provided around the plans for creating a 3-D sketch up model of the town center.

Commissioner Tiffin Goodman arrived at 6:10

PLANNING FOR THE PUBLIC HEARING:

Alison Van Gorp gave an overview of the draft presentation elements for the public hearing.

Discussion:

- One commissioner inquired about how the vision principles link to the policy options being put forward.
- Height: One commissioner expressed some concern about downzoning properties within a ½ mile radius of transit. Another Commissioner was concerned that some properties were being downzoned and some upzoned without a clear rationale being expressed. Many felt that there needed to be a more open ended conversation with the public around height at the hearing.
- Commissioners discussed how the affordable housing requirement should be framed. They felt that they had not yet settled on a specific proposal, though they agree affordable housing should be included as an incentive/requirement of some kind.
- Commissioners discussed how to frame “proposals” or “options under consideration” for height as well as other regulatory concepts. Many felt that there has not been enough analysis and discussion to put forward proposals and that these are really options under consideration at this point.

Direction:

- The Commission directed staff to add a slide that clarifies which topics will be reviewed at the first hearing, as well as the topics for the future meetings
- Staff should add a blank map with a question mark to the height limit board.
- Staff should reframe the affordable housing “proposal” as something under consideration by the Commission.
- Staff should prepare 2 binders with all of the comments received to-date to have available at the hearing.
- The Commission would like to frame issues as concepts for consideration rather than proposals. They do want to get these concepts out to the public because they are reflective of the issues under discussion to-date by the Joint Commission.

MASSING CONCEPTS:

Joe Tovar provided an overview of the height and massing concepts being discussed between the Architectural Design subcommittee and the Tovar/MAKERS consultant team.

Proposals for consideration:

- reducing façade height limit to 60’
- using an average daylight plane requirement to reduce bulk and mass along the sidewalk
- Block frontage standards to encourage pedestrian friendly feel
- Articulation standards to break down apparent mass and create distinctive storefronts
- Major façade articulation to regulate the amount of continuous horizontal mass
- Integrating façade details to create character and identity for individual buildings

Commissioner Tian departed at 7:15

Direction:

- Advance the proposed façade height reduction and the average daylight plane concept to the public hearing for feedback.
- Provide a poster at the hearing with images from existing MI buildings and a board with good and bad examples from other communities (more of a focus on good examples). Include a picture of the Chase building to illustrate “wedding cake” style stepbacks. Include both aerials and streetviews to illustrate visual impacts of daylight plane.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- Commissioner Brandt gave an overview of the Architectural Design Subcommittee’s scope of work. They are currently focused on defining a building height standard as well as building massing and articulation. They now need feedback from the commission and the public regarding the type of buildings the community wants and how bulk and modulation should be regulated.
- Commissioner Hubbell reported on the work of the Communications Subcommittee. They have focused on framing the format and content for the upcoming public hearing. It will be important to ensure participants know there are multiple ways to comment – testify today or at future meetings, written comments, electronic comments, etc. They have focused on the “big four things” as the subject matter for this meeting – vision, building height, building mass/articulation and affordable housing.

PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT:

Direction:

- Commissioners will divide up to staff each station during the open house.
- Staff will give a 15-20 min presentation, then the commission will receive comments.
- It’s a true public hearing, Commissioners are there to listen and will not respond to commenters.

CITY COUNCIL BRIEFING:

- Colin Brandt and Suzanne Skone volunteered to attend. Others interested in attending will notify Scott Greenberg.
- Staff will make a brief presentation to Council. The presentation should include a warning that the Joint Commission may need additional time or resources due to the large body of work in front of them.

ADDITIOINAL DISCUSSION:

- One Commissioner suggested that the process should be “paused” at some point to look at the overall plan for Town Center. He suggested putting out a visualization of the proposals (sketch up model) to the community for additional feedback. He also suggested developing the overarching policy language that provides a framework for the code update in advance of drafting the actual code language.

Proposal from Mr. Greenberg:

- Have a discussion at the January 27 Commission meeting on the Comprehensive Plan policies related to Town Center. Staff will then draft the policies for review at a future meeting. Once a recommended policy package is ready, it will be forwarded to Council for review and approval. Then the commission can move forward with code drafting. We may need to bring in additional consulting resources to help support code writing so that staff can focus on drafting the policy language.

COMMITTEE UPDATES, PART 2:

- Vice-Chair Weinman gave an update on the work of the Best Practices Subcommittee. The subcommittee is analyzing the codes from twelve peer cities. A summary of the preliminary findings from this analysis was passed out to the Commission. One thing of note is Kirkland's new approach to upper story setbacks – based on a % of mass that must be removed from upper floors, leaving flexibility to the designer on how to achieve the reduction.

NEXT MEETING:

The next special Joint Commission meeting is scheduled for JANUARY 27, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Friedman adjourned the Joint Commission meeting at 8:47 PM.