

Planning Commission
Special Meeting
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
Mandy Cole, Chair
April 23, 2024

I. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – Read by Vice Chair Pedersen

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land, and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. Gunalchéesh!

II. ROLL CALL

Mandy Cole, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Planning Commission (PC), held in Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, virtually via Zoom Webinar, and telephonically, to order at 5:32 p.m.

Commissioners present: Commissioners present in Chambers – Mandy Cole, Chair; Erik Pedersen, Vice Chair; Travis Arndt, Clerk; Matthew Bell, Deputy Clerk; Adam Brown; Nina Keller; David Epstein, Jessalynn Rintala, Lacey Derr

Commissioners present via video conferencing – None

Commissioners absent: None

Staff present: Jill Lawhorne, CDD Director; David Peterson, Planner II; Forrest Courtney, Planner II; Nicolette Chappell, CDD Administrative Coordinator; Lily Hagerup, CDD Administrative Assistant; Sherri Layne, Attorney III; Alix Pierce, Tourism Manager; Scott Ciambor, CDD Planning Manager; Minta Montalbo, Senior Planner; Daniele Gaucher, Administrative Officer.

Assembly members: Paul Kelly

III. REQUEST FOR AGENDA CHANGES AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA – None

IV. REGULAR AGENDA

AME2018 0007: Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

STAFF PRESENTATION – by Planning Manager Ciambor. The packet includes a staff memo with recommendations. Staff answers to commissioner questions can be found on page 471. The plan includes public and agency comments at various places in the packet. Kirby Day and Betsy Brenneman from the Blueprint Steering Committee are in the room to answer questions as well.

Ms. Cole explained the PC role is not to approve or deny the plan. Rather, it is to make a recommendation to the Assembly.

QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

Ms. Derr asked who would be responsible for making the changes recommended in testimony in the additional materials packet. Mr. Ciambor said staff would make the changes along with any changes from the Assembly.

Prior to public comment, Ms. Cole gave a review of the rules for public testimony.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Duff Mitchell, Pioneer Avenue – Member of JCOS – Spoke as the manager of Juneau Hydropower. Mr. Mitchell said Juneau has the power capacity for the docks. Juneau Hydropower supports dock electrification and downtown circulator buses. They support the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan.

Ms. Cole asked Mr. Mitchell what he sees as the hold up on moving forward on electrifying the docks. Mr. Mitchell answered the costs have increased significantly over the years and, to his knowledge, the CBJ has not done the necessary environmental permitting yet. The CBJ has recently hired a consultant and going forward, this should make it go more smoothly.

Betsy Brenneman, Willow Drive – Ms. Brenneman was a member on the steering committee. She said the plan was intent of the plan was to be action-oriented to nurture the preservation, restoration and revitalization of the downtown area. She thanked Beth McKibben, Nathaniel Dye, and Alix Pierce for their involvement and help to the committee. The Steering Committee supports recommending the assembly adopt it as an ordinance.

Ms. Rintala asked for more information how enforcement was a hindrance. Ms. Brenneman said there were things on the books that did not achieve the desired outcomes. Specifically, there was a tax incentive program to encourage development of apartment dwellings downtown. Ms. Brenneman said that seems to have been ineffective. She suggested there could be value in using ‘disincentives’ as well.

Ms. Cole was interested in the ‘all types of housing’ option and asked for more details. Ms. Brenneman said this includes housing for tourism seasonal housing, legislative housing, low-

income housing, and year-round downtown housing. Because there are so many different types of people downtown, multiple types of housing accommodations are needed.

Ms. Cole asked if there is anything in the plan that could have impact on downtown housing. Ms. Brenneman said the tables in the back of the packet provide good guidance.

Mr. Epstein asked if she had compared Juneau to what other cruise ship cities have done and compare that to what we can do here. She said Ms. McKibben had brought information about other tourism towns but not necessarily cruise ship towns.

Mr. Bell asked if they were able to do it today, what would they reprioritize? She said nothing. Housing remains top priority.

Ms. Keller asked her view what could be done regarding housing and short-term housing. Ms. Brenneman said the city has waited long to deal with it and suggested a survey of other communities for their ideas for solutions.

Mr. Arndt referred to her comments about disincentives, saying he prefers carrots to sticks, asked what else they had talked about. She agreed carrots are nicer than sticks but she has not seen effective carrots. The downtown population has changed and there are fewer office workers and businesses in the downtown area than before.

Steve Behnke (via Zoom) – 4545 Thane Road - representing the Board of Renewable Juneau – The board participated in Blueprint downtown and appreciates their environmental stress. However, the plan has a weakness. On pages 57 and 192, the plan speaks to “explore feasibility of providing shore power.” We are past the ‘explore feasibility’ stage. The board recommends adding verbiage to say, “It is the policy of the CBJ that private and public docks that berth cruise ships will provide shore power to cruise ships while they are in port.”

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

Mr. Arndt asked if it is better for this to be a resolution or an ordinance. Director Lawhorne strongly recommended it be recommended as an ordinance adopting it into the Comprehensive plan.

Mr. Pedersen referenced the 2-year review clause and asked how that would work. Ms. Lawhorne explained the 2-year review is for the department to review and confirm the plan and meshes well and is conforming and there are not any conflicts. Since the department is currently in process rewriting the comp plan as well as blueprint, they are, in effect, doing this now.

Ms. Cole how adopting the Blueprint by ordinance might affect the Title 49 rewrite plan. Ms. Lawhorne said the assembly fully supports the rewrite and there is confidence it will be funded through the budget process. If blueprint is adopted, it would be driving force for next 3 to 5 years.

Ms. Lawhorne agreed with Ms. Brenneman that code enforcement is a challenge. There is one staff member for all code enforcement. Much of it has no fines. If they are unable to bring a person into compliance, the final option is to use the court system.

*****AT EASE 6:24 – 6:32*****

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Ms. Derr has served on the Docks & Harbors board and said CBJ is past the ‘feasibility’ of dock electrification phase. It is feasible.

Mr. Arndt said the plan should be moved forward but said he is torn between “resolution” and “ordinance”. The problem he sees is the weaknesses in spots where the verbiage needs to be updated. Ms. Cole clarified the PC recommendation would be to approve the plan when it is in final version. Ms. Lawhorne said other CBJ departments have been involved and updates have been made. The intent is that it will be up to date by the final draft. Mr. Ciambor added there is a list of updates included in the plan and explained some of them.

Ms. Cole said she supports this moving forward, including the comments. Her main comment is that housing does not seem properly prioritized as the TOP priority. She mentioned a recent case in the downtown MU area that did not include housing. She would like to see a ‘different set of rules’ to enforce housing. Mr. Arndt asked if she would prefer something in the plan requiring housing be included in all downtown projects. Ms. Cole did not think that but she would be interested in stronger language to encourage housing downtown.

Ms. Rintala pointed out there is no mention of avalanche or landslide areas. Ms. Lawhorne said the PC, the assembly, and the community discussed this topic and the assembly decided to regulate moderate and severe avalanche zones and not landslide zones.

MOTION: *by Mr. Pedersen that the PC move the draft Blueprint Downtown area plan and recommend to the Assembly its adoption as an addendum to the Comprehensive plan by ordinance.*

Mr. Epstein asked why the motion was ordinance rather than resolution. Mr. Pedersen said he relied on staff and public comment recommendations. Ms. Cole agreed saying she feels adoption by ordinance makes the most sense.

MOTION TO AMEND: *by Ms. Cole to strengthen the preference for housing downtown by adding language to emphasize a stronger focus on housing with stronger preference language for projects involving housing downtown.*

Ms. Keller commented short term rentals should be included. Ms. Lawhorne told the PC the CBJ is forming a short-term rental task force with the goal of looking at short-term rentals and how they could be regulated.

Mr. Arndt suggested verbiage, “we would like to see even more emphasis placed on housing and the increasing number of housing units in the downtown core as part of this plan.”

Ms. Rintala suggested they make reference to page 159 of the draft plan as that includes specific action items for housing.

Ms. Keller suggested adding the phrase “year-round available housing” to discourage short-term housing. Mr. Arndt said we need all types of housing.

Motion to amend passed without objection

Amended motion passed on roll call with no objection

V. ADJOURNMENT –

Having no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Jorgensen Business Assists (907)723-6134 🇺🇸