



PLANNING COMMISSION & CITY COUNCIL

JOINT MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 4:00 PM

- Members Present:** Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Russ Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

Chair Dan Cary
Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Charles Castner
Commissioner David Rosengard
- Members Absent:** Commissioner Brooke Sisco
Commissioner Ginny Carlson
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
- 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.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL LOCATIONS OF NEW PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY

City Planner Jacob Graichen shared the map of a new location to be considered for placing the Public Safety Facility. He said it is currently zoned Apartment Residential and for a while had been looked at by developers to build apartments while it was on the market.

He said it is now being purchased by the St. Helens School District and would need to be rezoned to Public Lands. He said they should look at rezoning it before the Housing Needs Analysis happens in 2027.

City Administrator John Walsh said the new police station has a whole team that has worked together to create a design for a police station and are ready to build it. He said this discussion was to give direction to staff on how to move forward with the two front runner properties.

David Lintz, a professional project manager, came to the design team when the Kaster Road site came to a halt. He said they had been working on the site at 1771 Columbia Boulevard and now this new site off Gable Road. He mentioned some of the differences between the two sites.

He mentioned the Gable Road site would be an easily buildable site, as the property is flat, and could take the current design of the building would fit right on this property with no changes to anything other than the parking and public improvements.

There was a discussion about the wetlands on the site. It was mentioned these were not significant wetlands to the City, but they still needed to have a delineation done.

Chair Dan Cary mentioned that his experience is in wetlands and back in January of 2020 he had done a small study on the adjacent property. He mentioned it is very wet in that area and when he was doing his study, he had looked over at this property and saw it was also very wet. He said the water was coming from this potential property onto the property he was doing the study for. He said it looks suspicious as a potential wetland.

There was a small discussion about a payment in lieu to be paid to be able to impact the wetland on the property.

There was a discussion about the access points and public improvements.

Lintz said he did think the 1771 Columbia Boulevard location was a better option, as it was downtown, more centrally located, and there was an updated budget to make this site affordable.

There was a discussion about the different needs for the police and how they would fit these building types on the two different sites.

There was a discussion about how the extra property would be used for the Gable Road location and how the City would partner with the School District.

Mayor Scholl shared how this size of the parcel would allow for growth if it was needed in the future. He said there was plenty of space to expand storage and a building. Scholl said as the City limits grow into the Urban Growth Boundary, this space seems to be the best location.

Chair Cary said in twenty years, there is not going to be much care about how much property they purchased, but the location of the police station. He said the focus should be on the best location for a station

Commissioner David Rosengard said in thirty years this property would allow for expansion and growth.

Commissioner Jennifer Shoemaker said it is unfortunate for the Houlton District if they lose the police station to this area of town. She felt the location in the Houlton District was the better option, as it was more centralized.

City Councilor Russ Hubbard mentioned he thought the Gable Road site would be difficult for response time, with a school zone there and the dangerous intersection of Gable Road and Columbia River Highway. He also agreed the location in Houlton District was the better location.

City Councilor Brandon Sundeen said the police do not sit at the station waiting for calls. He mentioned they are usually already out patrolling, so the location being central is not as important as a factor in selection as it seems.

There was a discussion about the cons for both locations. They also discussed some of the positives for both locations.

The group agreed the Gable Road site should be a consideration and did think City staff should look more into the wetland situation and if this site is one that could be used for the new Public Safety Facility.

DISCUSSION OF PLANNING COMMISSION PROACTIVE ITEMS

Commissioner Shoemaker shared that there had been some movement on these items to have other members of the Planning Commission take over as a Chair of the subcommittees.

Graichen mentioned the rules had changed about subcommittees now and they would no longer be able to have these types of meetings without minutes, public notice, online viewing, and the other things required for a public meeting. He said they would need to do the research on these items individually and then bring back their findings to the meetings to discuss them.

There was a discussion how the group should move forward on the Proactive Items.

There was a discussion about the Plaza Square. Graichen mentioned they would need the sign off from Columbia County who owns the property, but also since the Plaza is a Historic Landmark on the Historic Landmarks Registry list, it would also go before the Historic Landmarks Commission, , to make sure all development or changes met the historic guidelines.

Graichen also shared how he would like to see the accessibility of the Plaza changed so that those with disabilities had easier access to the space as well.

Commissioner Shoemaker said she spoke with two County Commissioners about exploring options on how to improve this space. She said they agreed to allowing her to research some ideas to improve this space with more accessibility and to restore it back to a more historical look.

There was a discussion about how the Plaza looks now and some of the ways to restore it back to its more historical look.

Mayor Scholl moved the discussion about the parking that is in the downtown area. He said they think they need to start looking more into how to add more parking or the code requirements for parking to help the developers that are starting to look at our Riverfront Development. He also shared some parking areas that the City already owned that could count towards downtown parking.

Commissioner Shoemaker said it is not a bad idea to have a parking structure a further away that would encourage people to walk past all the businesses in the downtown area.

Councilor Sundeen said there was some discussion at the last joint meeting about some quick and simple solutions, such as changing the parking alignment from parallel parking to diagonal and he asked if there had been any more movement with this action. Graichen mentioned this agenda item came up quick (with minimal prep time), and the ideas, preliminary in nature, had not been explored to date.

There was a discussion about the parking inventory they currently have and what is needed.

There was also a discussion about having a parking management plan created and the ability to fund it.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

*There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor

/s/ Dan Cary
Dan Cary, Chair