



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 6:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

- Members Present:** Chair Dan Cary
Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner David Rosengard
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Charles Castner
Commissioner Ginny Carlson
- Members Absent:** Commissioner Brooke Sisco
- Staff Present:** City Planner Jacob Graichen
Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho
Community Development Admin Assistant Christina Sullivan
City Councilor Mark Gunderson
- Others:** Brady Preheim
Will Uebelacker
Jerry & Joanne Eisenzimmer
Pam Powell
Paul Pulliam
Melissa Moore
Tammy Scamfer
Steve Toschi

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

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

Toschi, Steve. Toschi was called to speak. He shared his concerns about the discussion to take place at the Joint City Council Planning Commission meeting over the Economic Opportunity Analysis. He said some of the recommendations made by the company who started the study seemed to be more in favor of low-income housing and changing industrial lands.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. **Planning Commission Minutes Dated May 14, 2024**

Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker made a correction to page seven of the minutes.

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker's motion and Commissioner Rosengard's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes, with the edits, dated May 14, 2024, as written. Commissioner Carlson abstained. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Castner; NAYS: None]

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA (times are earliest start time)

B. **6:00 p.m. Variance at 325 Strand Street - Uebelacker**

Chair Dan Cary opened the Public Hearing at 6:07 p.m. There were no ex-parte contacts, conflicts of interests, or bias in this matter.

Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho presented the staff report dated June 4, 2024. She shared where the property was located and that it was two separate lots. She said one of those lots was vacant, and the other had a building on it. She mentioned the variance was to allow a reduction in the off-street parking required for a future development proposal. She said this would not be a review of the proposed building for the property, as that would come before them at another time. She said the reason why they were not looking at the building today is because if the variance was not granted, the applicant would need to prepare a completely different proposal.

Dimsho said in 2019, a demolition permit was issued for the building, mostly to remove siding and expose any dry rot to be replaced. The applicant hoped that by doing this they would be able to determine if the building could be repaired and they would be able to salvage what was there. She mentioned the permit was issued, the work was started, and then ultimately the permit expired. She said the building remained in the half-demolished form and it was noted that the deterioration was likely sped up due to being left open to the elements. In 2020, the City hired contractors to start infrastructure work on the south end near the proposed property. The City's contractor expressed concern about the building and concern that, due to the deterioration, it might collapse. So, the property owner pulled another permit in 2023 to shore up the south end of the building to keep it from falling when the construction around it was being done. She said the temporary shoring was only approved for one year.

She said the proposed concept of the project was for a four-story building, with two commercial spaces on the lower level and 16 residential units above. She said of those, eight were considered one bedroom and eight were considered loft units. She said there was also a proposed rooftop recreational area.

She discussed the that studios require one parking space per unit and one-bedroom units require one and a half parking spaces per unit. She mentioned the Commission would need to determine if lofts could be defined as studios, particularly since the square footage of these were larger than the one bedroom units. She said that would be a total of 20 parking spaces using the studio calculation or 24 spaces using the one-bedroom calculation.

She mentioned the commercial units were proposed to be eating and drinking establishments. With this concept, the required parking would be one parking space for 50 square feet of dining area, plus one space for every two employees on the largest shift. She said the total for the commercial spaces would be 32 parking spaces. Combined with the residential units this would be between 52 and 56 parking spaces required for this concept.

She discussed what the applicant had proposed for parking in the concept provided. She mentioned there were two provisions in this district for parking. The first allowed on-street parking to count towards their off-street parking requirements. She said there were six on-street parking and seven proposed off-street parking spaces in the concept shown by the applicant.

She said the second provision allowed in this district is a parking exemption if the existing building footprint takes up a certain amount of the lot. The applicant used this provision in the code for their concept.

Dimsho pointed out a few flaws in this portion of the proposal from the applicant. She said this code says there must be an existing, lawful, building footprint. She mentioned the back portion of the building is no longer there and would not count as an existing lawful, building footprint. She said in addition there is a definition that says a building has a roof that is supported by columns or walls and if the roof was removed there would no longer be a building.

She mentioned the City Engineering Manager said there was a lack of parking and there was a daily occurrence of parking congestion in this area. She also mentioned that there is no transit system and so most of the tenants would have their own vehicle they would need to park. The City Engineer said she recommended that the applicant provide at least fifty to sixty percent of the parking spaces needed or the Planning Commission should deny the application.

Dimsho also shared a comments received from two neighboring properties. One expressed concern about parking in that area and what it would create for his tenants. The other was in support of the application..

Uebelacker, Will. Applicant. Uebelacker is the applicant and representative for the owner. He shared a presentation where he addressed his application and the concerns the staff mentioned. He said he understands that parking is a challenge for the downtown area and felt their proposal met the needs of what is required. He said he saw the potential in the upcoming economic growth happening in St. Helens and hoped the Development Code would not be used to stall or halt future development in their community. He said the code they proposed to help them with the parking requirements should not be overlooked for their building as there is a building there that covers [at least] fifty percent of the property in question, which is what he said the code requires. He also gave a more detailed description of what the building units would have inside of them. He said the city should provide a parking structure or some sort of massive transit solution to help encourage development in their downtown area, instead of discouraging it through parking codes.

In Favor

No one spoke in favor of the application.

In Neutral

No one spoke as neutral of the application.

In Opposition

Eisenzimmer, Jerry. Eisenzimmer was called to speak. He said he lives in a property near the proposed application. He said that there is already a parking crisis in the downtown area. He said there are three restaurants, apartments, and other businesses and not enough parking to accommodate all those businesses now. He did not think the Planning Commission should grant such a large parking variance. He also mentioned that when he worked for the Fire Department, there was a three-floor rule for buildings as they could not access any building levels that were higher. He said he did not believe the department had the equipment still to this day to be able to access taller buildings.

Toschi, Steve. Toschi was called to speak. He is a resident of St. Helens. He said when he first met with the Planning Department, he was neutral, but changed his opinion, as he felt the applicant did not meet any of the legal criteria needed for the variance application. He said he did agree with the applicant that the City should implement a parking structure to encourage more developers to come and have an easier time with the Development Code rules on parking.

Elliot, Michael. Elliot was called to speak. He is the owner of a neighboring property. He said he would love to see that piece of property developed, but not in the way that was being proposed by the applicant. He mentioned there is a large parking issue in this area. He said he receives complaints from his tenants as well about the parking issue. He said allowing a project to develop with an immediate need for parking is not feasible for this area. He also had a concern about the height proposed as well.

Rebuttal

Uebelacker, Will. Uebelacker was called to speak. He said he did not agree with the neighboring properties who protested his proposal, as they used the same code provisions to renovate their historic

building. He said they could just renovate or remodel their building, but he felt it was better to just build a brand-new building to create a much better space for the downtown area. He also said if they allowed a parking variance, this would allow them time to determine what exactly they would like to build that would meet a smaller scale.

End of Oral Testimony

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

Close of Public Hearing & Record

Deliberations

Dimsho clarified that they were only looking at a parking variance and not discussing the proposed concept complies with the architectural guidelines.

Chair Cary asked if the variance were approved, could it apply to another proposal? Dimsho mentioned this would not be the case. She said if the Commission approves the variance, there is a recommended condition of approval that it would only apply to this specific development of both properties. She also mentioned an approval would not apply if they decided to renovate the current building. She also said, if approved, there would be a validity period.

There was a small discussion on the future road and parking situation for the Riverfront Development.

There was a discussion about the proposed residential units and whether they were studios or one bedroom. The Planning Commission determined this did not make a difference in their decision to grant or not grant the application.

There was a discussion about allowing this amount of parking spaces to be removed from this project and how it would affect the other properties and neighbors to this new build. Dimsho did mention include a parking study for the downtown area would be included as a project to be completed in the new Transportation Systems Plan. A new parking study would determine what the parking needs are and would create opportunities to leverage grant money towards adding more parking.

The Planning Commission agreed the number of parking spaces being eliminated with this variance was too great and agreed they should deny the variance.

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker's motion and Commissioner Rosengard's second, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended denial of the Variance. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner; NAYS: None]

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Commissioner Carlson's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Chair to sign the findings. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner; NAYS: None]

C. 6:15 p.m. Historic Resource Review at 120 S 1st Street - Kenoyer

Chair Dan Cary opened the Public Hearing at 7:40 p.m. There were no ex-parte contacts, conflicts of interests, or bias in this matter.

City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report dated June 3, 2024. He mentioned this home was a designated landmark. He shared several early to current photographs of the home and shared some of the history behind the home and how it became added to the Designated Landmarks Registry.

He said the applicant proposed several exterior modifications and renovations. He discussed the siding and how originally it had three different types of siding on the different levels of the home. He shared

some photos of how the siding had changed over the years and mentioned currently the home is sided in all vinyl. He said the applicant plans to remove the vinyl, if they purchase the property. He said they are unsure of what is underneath and what shape it is in. He said that he recommended a condition of approval that the siding, if needed to be replaced, matches the color, material, and style of what the home had for siding in the past.

He mentioned that due to the fact some repairs may not require a building permit, he thought it pertinent that one of the conditions of approval be that any modifications or repairs come before the Planning [Historic Landmarks] Commission to be sure it is meeting the architectural and historical guidelines of the home and zoning district.

He also mentioned the roof. He said the roof was necessary to keep the integrity of the building and mentioned the applicant planned to replace it with the grey, traditional, type of roofing. There was a discussion on the color of the roof. Graichen mentioned they could mention colors if it has to do with keeping the home as close to the historic look of the home.

He also shared the applicant planned to replace the door with another wood door and a key difference would be six ornamental windows instead of four.

He also talked about the repair of the stairs and attaching new safety rails to the stairs on the front porch. He shared a few ways to add these to keep with the historical look of the home. He also talked about the safety railing for the stairs down to the back of the home to access the lower half of the home from the exterior. He said he recommended just not attaching them to the home.

He also discussed foundation work that needed to be done to the home to make the home safe and keep it from sinking. He shared that the repairs would likely not be viewable from the exterior, but the portions that were able to be seen would be a metal repair recommended by the foundation repair.

Kenoyer, Melissa. Kenoyer is a potential buyer of the home. She said she felt the home was a stunning piece of history and wanted to stay true to the integrity of the home as she repaired it. Before purchasing the home, they wanted to see if Planning Commission would approve the desired repairs they wanted to make. She said the foundation was a huge repair that needed to be done.. She discussed some of the water damage and how some of the repairs would possibly affect the look of the home. She said she could not show them what this would look like, because it would require a structural engineer, which they did not want to move forward with before they had the Planning Commission agree to the repairs that needed to be made.

There was a small discussion about the color palette the applicant planned to use.

In Favor

No one spoke in favor of the application.

In Neutral

Pulliam, Paul. Pulliam was called to speak. He is a neighbor to the property. He said they were excited to see the home renovated and restored to its original historic look. He also wanted to be sure they would use the retaining wall and garage area to be the same style as the home. He said there was a concern about the drop off between his property and the property being discussed and wanted to be sure there were going to be guidelines in place to make sure that area stayed safe.

In Opposition

No one spoke in opposition to the application.

Rebuttal

There was no rebuttal.

End of Oral Testimony

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

Close of Public Hearing & Record

Deliberations

There was a small discussion about the handrails and the Planning Commission agreed the handrails should be attached to the porch, but the side rails were not attached to the house. They said it should be put into place for safety.

Vice Chair Shoemaker said she would like to encourage the new owner to restore the door or at least look in to restoring it to stick with the integrity of the home. She mentioned if restored rather than replaced, it might be more affordable. If the door could not be restored, she would hope they would keep the glass and try to build something with the original glass and replace it with something like for like.

There was a discussion about the siding and restoring it back to the original look. The Commission agreed before siding was placed back on, that the application would come back before the Historic Landmarks Commission for final approval.

They discussed the siding and said they would like to see them restore what they find under the vinyl siding that is being removed. They would like to see them repaired with materials that meet historic standards.

They agreed that the foundation should be fixed, and that the applicant should follow the guidelines of the structural engineer to do what is necessary to save this historic building. They would like to see the visible fixes minimized as possible..

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosengard’s motion and Vice Chair Shoemaker’s second, the Historic Landmark’s Commission unanimously recommended approval of the Historic Resource Review as recommended by staff with the discussed changes. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner; NAYS: None]

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker’s motion and Commissioner Carlson’s second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Chair to sign the findings. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner; NAYS: None]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

D. Architectural Review at 325 Strand Street - Uebelacker

Dimsho suggested that due to the outcome of the Variance hearing, this application would need to be submitted for a different layout. She said the Commission could hold off discussing the details until a new application was received.

The Commission agreed to hold the discussion for this item until a new application was resubmitted.

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

- E. Site Design Review at 71 Cowlitz Street – The Klondike Tavern
- F. Temporary Sign Permit at 2100 Block of Columbia Blvd – Heather Epperly Agency, Inc.
- G. Temporary Use Permit at 735 S Columbia River Hwy – Bethel Fellowship

There was no discussion on the Planning Director Decisions.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

H. Planning Department Activity Report – May

There was no discussion on the Planning Department Activity Report.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

- I. Architectural Standards
- J. Vacant Storefronts
- K. The Plaza Square

Vice Chair Shoemaker said she would like to move forward with getting other Commissioners set in place to be the chair of the subcommittees for the other items on the list. She said some of the Commissioners had expressed interest in getting involved.

There was a small discussion about the different items on the list.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Graichen discussed the agenda for the Joint Planning Commission and City Council meeting.

There was a small discussion about the Plaza and how to move forward with redesign.

Commissioner Scott Jacobson brought up that he would like to see the City work on a way to conditionalize property for archeological purposes. The Commission discussed this item might be more of a Proactive Item that could be added later but could be a subject of discussion in the For Your Information Items section until there is a more formal proactive item formed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*