



PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES Tuesday, September 08, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Members Present: Chair Hubbard
Vice Chair Cary
Commissioner Cohen
Commissioner Semling
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Webster
Commissioner Pugsley

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Planner Graichen
Associate Planner Dimsho
City Councilor Carlson
Community Development Admin Assistant Sullivan

Others: None

1. 7:00 P.M. CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

2. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Planning Commission Minutes dated August 11, 2020

Motion: Upon Commissioner Semling's motion and Commissioner Pugsley's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes Dated August 11, 2020. [AYES: Vice Chair Cary, Commissioner Pugsley, Commissioner Cohen, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Semling; Nays: None]

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

There were no topics from the floor.

4. NEW COUNCIL ADOPTED ZOOM MEETING POLICIES & GUIDELINES. COMMISSION OPERATIONS, EXCUSED ABSENCES, ETC.

B. Zoom Meeting Policies & Guidelines

City Planner Graichen said there is an attendance provision in the Planning Commission code that a Commissioner cannot have more than three unexcused absences because it results in non-conformance of duty which is grounds for removal. He mentioned some may have been uncomfortable with the ZOOM format and was not sure if this would be considered an unexcused absence. He did mention that there were several laptops in the City building that were available for use, and two of the Commissioners were already using them. He mentioned that there may be more if a Commissioner felt the need to use one, instead of their personal device.

Chair Hubbard mentioned he had emailed the Commission asking about their comfort level of being ZOOM only and said a few mentioned they would prefer to meet in person. He understood this is not an option now.

Associate Planner Dimsho asked if there were enough laptops available to accommodate the public if there was a hearing and someone needed to testify that did not have access to ZOOM. Graichen said he believed they would have to.

There was a small discussion about the number of laptops available for use.

5. PLANNING COMMISSION TERM EXPIRATIONS

Graichen mentioned that every year there is at least one person who has an expiration, but that this year there were two expirations. He mentioned that Vice Chair Cary and Commissioner Cohen had terms expiring at the end of the year. He asked them both if they wanted to continue on the Commission. They both agreed they wanted to continue. Graichen said the Code says after two terms, we automatically advertise the position. He also asked the Commission if there was any objection to the two continuing in their position. No commissioners objected. Graichen also asked who would volunteer to be on the interview committee. Chair Hubbard and Commissioner Semling volunteered to be on the interview committee.

6. URBAN RENEWAL PLAN AMENDMENT

Associate Planner Dimsho said the original Urban Renewal Plan was adopted in 2017. Since then, they have found that the revenue projections are not meeting expectations, mostly due to Armstrong World Industries leaving. They were expecting to have \$250,000 in revenue this year, but ended up with only \$150,000. She said that Urban Renewal is a funding tool that cities use to fund projects that are important economic drivers to the region. She presented a list of the projects on the original plan, which are not changing with the proposed Urban Renewal Amendment. She mentioned that Urban Renewal funds would help with the City leverage grants.

Dimsho said that whenever cities amend Urban Renewal areas over one percent, cities must go through a re-adoption process. She said they are going through those steps to amend the boundary and improve revenue projections. She said they are looking to add properties that will contribute revenues and remove properties that are not likely to contribute. She went through the different properties with the Commission and why they were being suggested to be removed or added. She mentioned that there would be a net loss of seven acres, but the properties added would benefit the revenue projections.

Chair Hubbard asked if the Armstrong property was being removed because of the closure. Dimsho said they are not proposing to remove that property because there may be a new industrial user on the property. Vice Chair Cary said he was aware that consultants had been hired to do environmental assessments and clean up on the site. He said once the word gets out these have been done, he thinks a buyer will come in.

Commissioner Cohen asked if the City was communicating with other taxing districts. Dimsho said letters had gone out to all the different taxing districts and that she did call downs to ask if they had any questions about the Urban Renewal Amendment. She said there was no push back so far from other districts. The taxing districts seem to be interested in seeing the riverfront redevelop. Commissioner Cohen asked if the people had to go for a vote. Dimsho said that the only way this Urban Renewal Amendment would go to the voters is if enough residents signed a referral petition.

There was a small discussion about the non-profit/low income apartments on Gable Road and their tax-exempt status.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Pugsley's motion and Commissioner Webster's second, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the St. Helens Planning Commission finds, based upon the information provided in the staff report that no projects are being changed and no prior conformance to Comprehensive Plan findings are being changed, that the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan Amendment 2 conforms with the St. Helens Comprehensive Plan and further recommend that the St. Helens City Council adopt the proposed St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan Amendment 2. [AYES: Vice Chair Cary, Commissioner Pugsley, Commissioner Cohen, Commissioner Lawrence, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Semling; Nays: None]

7. PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

Graichen mentioned they received their first parklet application. Dimsho said the applicant is still working on finalizing the design based on staff feedback on the original submittal. Graichen said it has a few phases. It starts with the concept and then they move forward with a construction design and build it.

Commissioner Lawrence asked if this would be something different than what they already have with the outdoor seating. Graichen said a separate permit allows use of the public sidewalk, which is what they have now. The parklet allows use of the right-of-way (parking spaces).

Commissioner Cohen wanted to confirm that this was a temporary parklet installation. Graichen mentioned that approval is for six-month intervals. Commissioner Cohen asked if they could re-apply after six months and Graichen said yes.

There was a discussion on events and Halloweentown.

Vice Chair Cary asked if a parklet would eliminate the tables on the sidewalk. Graichen said if they maintain adequate public passageway, they can have tables in both areas. Vice Chair Cary asked about adequate passageway. Graichen mentioned it was four to five feet. Graichen also mentioned the code says the platform must be at the same level as the sidewalk to accommodate those in mobility devices. Graichen said because the curb in front of the proposed area is different heights, the applicant proposed a ramp up onto the parklet.

Commissioner Pugsley asked if the adjacent property owners or neighboring businesses were notified of the intent. Graichen said there is a requirement to notify abutting property owners and/or business owners. He said the first trial may bring up neighbors or residents who are unhappy or will complain about it. Graichen said if there are people that are upset about the parking limitations, it will be less likely to be renewed.

8. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Commissioner Cohen asked about the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) appeal. Graichen said he put the record together, and he had been talking with the legal counsel about other items they may need. Commissioner Cohen asked who was representing the City. Graichen mentioned it was Attorney Jordan Ramis PC, who has experience with the City. Commissioner Cohen said he hopes that LUBA upholds the Planning Commission decision.

Commissioner Cohen asked about the Public Works Director position. Graichen said when the previous Public Works Director left, they placed an interim person into the position. He mentioned Council was looking to fill the position with a permanent person. The Council interviewed three candidates, and the person they selected did not accept the position. Councilor Carlson said the Council was not happy with the other candidates, so they decided they would re-advertise. She mentioned that they want hire the right candidate; they did not want to rush it.

Graichen mentioned the middle school was done. He mentioned they had passed all their final inspections with a few corrections.

Dimsho reminded the Commission of a previous meeting where she had mentioned the Emerald Meadows subdivision would likely need some more setback variances. She told the Commission that she and the developer were able to work out their site plans with no variances needed.

Councilor Carlson said the City will be putting in sidewalks along North Vernonia Road. She said it would go out to bid hopefully by the first of the year.

Commissioner Pugsley asked about Auxiliary Dwelling Units (ADUs) and whether the City charges System Development Charges (SDCs). Councilor Carlson said they must make the account whole, so the City does not waive any fees for SDCs without the Council agreeing to pay for them with a different fund. Graichen said the way to save on the SDCs is to not put in a second water meter, but rather share a meter. This is because storm and sewer SDCs are charged based on the number and size of water meters.

There was a small discussion about the number of permits coming in and a few of the different projects that were active currently.

Commissioner Pugsley asked how the boundaries of the Houlton Business District zoning were determined. Graichen said it was a concept created before he started to work for the City. He said the previous City Planner had said it was arbitrary. Commissioner Cohen said the historic boundary of the City of Houlton helped provide the basis for the new zoning district.

There was a small discussion on streetscape and what is required for single-family and multi-family dwellings.

9. NEXT REGULAR MEETING: October 13, 2020

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*