

CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Joint Meeting—Development Commission and
Planning Policy Commission

6:30 PM
October 7, 2020

SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

Virtual Meeting

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Development Commissioners Present:

Richard Sowa, Chair
Mel Morgan, Vice Chair
Kevin Price
Michael Brennan
Richard Sanford
Brooke Shore
Arthur Schulte, Alternate

Administration/Staff:

Lucy Sloman, Land Development Mgr.
Keith Niven, Director, CP&D
Christen Leeson, Senior Planner
Doug Yormick, Assistant Planner
Samantha Suter, Consultant

Planning Policy Commissioners Present:

Joan Probala, Chair
Joy Lewis
Janice Carle
Jason Voiss

PPC Commissioners Not Present:

Ron Faul, Vice Chair
Bill Rinehart
Robin Beukers, Alternate

CALL TO ORDER

SOWA, Development Commission Chair, called the joint meeting of the Development Commission and the Planning Policy Commission to order at 6:32 PM. Due to the Governor's Proclamation 20-28 prohibiting meetings that fall under the Open Public Meetings Act from being conducted in person, tonight's meeting will be held entirely remotely. SOWA and Sloman provided an explanation of the process and some guidelines for participants at tonight's virtual meeting, including Commissioners and members of the public who wish to provide public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION)

SOWA asked for any objections to approval of minutes of the Development Commission meeting on July 15, 2020, and there were none. The minutes are approved.

AGENDA ITEMS

a) **Draft Olde Town Architectural Standards for Single Family Duplex, (D)**

Presented by:

Christen Leeson, Senior Planner

Keith Niven, Director, Community Planning & Development

Leeson made staff's presentation on the draft Olde Town architectural standards for Single-Family Duplex (SF-D). She explained the purpose of tonight's joint meeting, what has happened so far, and what activities are coming during the rest of 2020 and in 2021. She walked through the preliminary draft of the standards, as included in the agenda packet, including the area of applicability (page 12 of 29). The following comments were made during her presentation:

1.0. Mass and Scale, pages 6-7. SANFORD asked clarifying questions about how this document would fit with existing City regulations, such as CIDDS, IMC, etc. Sloman said this document would be an expansion of the regulations for Olde Town; whether it is a separate document or incorporated into the code has not yet been determined.

MORGAN said the Council asked for a “light hand” in the restrictiveness of these regulations. With that in mind, Sections 1.2 and 1.3 state “include...”, which could be taken as though the items that follow are the only options. Perhaps it would be better to state “may include...,” he noted. Sloman said staff has been discussing the exact phrases that are most appropriate to use. From staff’s perspective, some phrases are too vague and may not capture the intent. A good question for Commissioners’ input tonight is on the issue of how flexible these regulations should be versus ensuring predictability. MORGAN spoke in favor of less restrictive language, such as “may include.” Niven gave additional perspective on flexibility and the advantages of offering a menu of options for applicants. He noted ambiguity in code is an issue for the City right now, and both staff and the public would benefit from less rather than more ambiguity in the City’s regulations.

SOWA gave his views on the language in 1.2 and 1.3, and said he thought the Development Commission would feel pretty comfortable using the approach and language MORGAN has suggested. PRICE said he thinks most people would look at this through the lens of a builder or a developer, and more stringent regulations will help preserve and protect the character of this neighborhood. He asked what is the mechanism for any departures. He said less flexibility would benefit the public and the City. He also suggested a clarification of “two story buildings” in this section. Staff made a note of it.

LEWIS said she understands the Council’s direction for a “light touch” but she likes having clear choices outlined in this section, such as stating “you must pick two from the following list.” She spoke in favor of more prescriptive language rather than more open-ended. SCHULTE agreed, and said developers don’t always act on the best interest of the community, and these regulations could help ensure that new development fits the community. SHORE said the use of “shall” weakens the prescriptive nature of the regulations. She said she also likes the idea of listing options of what must be included, and giving applicants choices.

BRENNAN asked about the process for any departures from the regulations. Niven said staff is reviewing this concurrently with the Commissioners, and has not yet done any work on how departures would be handled. Sloman pointed out that the CIDDS does not allow for any departures. SOWA said his sense is that the document is very clear about the intent of the regulations, and with that in mind, it seems unnecessary to be overly restrictive and perhaps limit creativity. He said he favors an approach that asks applicants to “show us what you are proposing” rather than use lists of what must be included. Sloman noted that performance standards and prescriptive standards both offer advantages and disadvantages. VOISS said he likes the idea of offering a menu of options rather than just allowing developers free rein to interpret the intentions. He asked whether staff has looked at what Clyde Hill and Medina are doing. Leeson replied the consultant has looked at any other cities, especially on the West Coast. She and Suter made a note of VOISS’ suggestion. Suter said Olde Town is not a historical district, but rather is a neighborhood whose character is an eclectic mix. She continued the City Council asked for a “light touch” in these regulations, which is reflected in electing for more performance-oriented than prescriptive-oriented standards.

SANFORD suggested staff review the references in 1.2 and 1.3 to provide clarity about whether they apply to one- or two-story buildings. Staff made a note of it.

PRICE asked does the 30-foot reference in 1.1 apply to length of buildings as well as width. Leeson it applies to the street-facing façade. SANFORD said the community and Council expressed concern about preventing “big-box buildings,” and asked do these regulations adequately address that. Sloman referred to regulations elsewhere in the draft that apply to windows and doors. SANFORD asked about FAR requirements for single-family homes in Olde Town. Leeson replied there is no FAR requirement, although City regulations limit development to 50 percent impervious surface. Sloman noted impervious surface would include terraces, sidewalks, walkways, driveways, and so on. SANFORD said the descriptions on pages 15-17 are more conceptual in nature and provide more introductory kinds of information than the “how to” sections that are presented first. Staff made a note of it. SOWA said the diagrams and photos are effective.

2.0. Roof Design, pages 8-9. PRICE suggested using “plane” in describing roof characteristics in 2.1 and 2.2. He added he would consider allowing flat roofs (2.4) if they provide an ecological function or provide space, with a limit placed on size. LEWIS expressed concern about maintenance issues with green roofs, which can become a eyesore if not maintained properly. She also said rooftop decks seem like a good idea but they don’t necessarily further the objective of bringing more community at street-level the same way that porches and front yards do.

MORGAN noted that 2.1 and 2.2 refer to “appropriate” and “possible” strategies, and said staff might want to review that language. He asked for clarification of how the “exception” would work in 2.4. Leeson explained what is intended and said staff will look at the language more closely for clarity. SANFORD said similarly, does 2.6, “medium to dark earth tones,” mean that a green metal roof would be excluded. Leeson said staff will also examine that language. MORGAN noted that the photo on page 23 shows a light-colored roof, but 2.6 specifies that only “medium to dark earth tones” are allowed. Sloman said staff will review and clarify.

SCHULTE suggested staff might consider combining 2.5 and 2.6 into one item.

MORGAN asked for clarification on 2.2, “roof surface visible from the street shall not extend beyond 40 feet...,” given that the proposed regulation in 1.1 that “buildings over 30 feet in width shall incorporate ...mass reduction techniques.” Suter clarified that the intention with the 40-foot specification is that it would allow for a generous overhang, often seen on traditional craftsman-type homes. MORAN asked does the depth of the lot matter. Suter replied our thinking was that the appearance from the street is of the most concern to people, so only the front would have to comply.

SANFORD said on 2.5-b, “Wood or simulated shakes or shingles,” do we want to encourage the use of wood shakes, given concerns about flammability and fire. Sloman explained that choices would be subject to the International Residential Building Code, and said staff will clarify with the Building Department. SCHULTE noted the tendency in the building industry is to not use shakes for durability reasons. PRICE agreed, and said they are generally cost-prohibitive and do not hold up well.

SOWA said he agrees with SANFORD’s earlier comment on the format that introductory information could be moved up before specific regulations are listed.

3.0. Building Materials and Colors, pages 10-11. SANFORD asked where is the list of building materials referred to in 3.1. Leeson replied staff is working on it now. SANFORD asked does the reference to “scaling materials” in 3.2 mean that more than one material is required. Leeson replied no; just one material acceptable. SANFORD suggested that wording be reviewed for clarity.

BRENNAN noted that 3.8 states that “high-intensity, extremely bright, fluorescent or metallic colors” can be used as trim and as an accent color, which could yield some very interesting results. Sloman referred to the list of the architectural details where accent colors can be used in 3.4. BRENNAN noted that “trim” is defined more narrowly in the glossary than the list in 3.4.

SCHULTE said 3.3 refers to primary and secondary materials, and asked is it up to the builder or homeowner to determine which material is primary, particularly if two materials look to be equally distributed. Leeson noted the regulation only applies to the street-facing façade. Suter said the designation depends largely on the façade design, and referred to the photo on the left of page 10. She continued staff discussed the option of designating a percentage as the determination of primary and secondary, but also felt that might be too prescriptive. SCHULTE noted that metal does not appear on the list of materials in 3.6, and asked does that mean it is prohibited. Suter replied Council indicated they weren’t sure they wanted to make that prohibition, and added metal is not commonly used in Issaquah.

VOISS spoke in favor of ensuring that accent and trim colors are adequately regulated. He said it would be possible to use different, bright colors on columns, trim, wraps around windows, and so on, and still meet the regulations as they are presented here. Suter replied in community meetings, people were pretty clear that they did not want to regulate the colors that would be allowed on front doors, but VOISS raises a good point. Staff made a note of it. MORGAN said he had the same concern, which also shows up in 3.7-b about the number of colors that could be used.

SANFORD asked would the list of building materials in 3.6 preclude using metal shakes. Sloman replied “natural looking” means that metal shakes would have to appear as though they were made of a natural material such as wood.

PRICE raised a concern about continuing the material used on the front façade on the sides of the building, either as a percentage of the side, such as one-third, or a certain number of feet, such as 15 feet. He continued buildings are experienced as whole objects and not just the facades, and the integrity of the building could be lost without ensuring that the materials used on the front also wrap around the corner. Leeson replied staff discussed that and was concerned about regulations being cost-prohibitive. Suter said she thinks PRICE’s point is a good one, and staff can discuss requiring materials be used on a portion of the building sides as well as the façade, VOISS agreed any language that would discourage “cutting corners” by not continuing façade materials around the building corner would be good.

SANFORD said under 3.7, a building could have three bright colors, say red, green, and yellow, as accent colors as long as the chroma is under 14, and asked is that correct. Sloman replied yes; that regulation applies to brightness but does not address appropriateness of the three color choices. She said staff can look at that language in more detail.

4.0. Windows, Doors, Front Porches, page 12. MORGAN described how the regulations could result in just one small window on the street-facing façade. Perhaps the regulations should specify that the window should be a minimum percentage of the façade, he added. LEWIS also spoke in favor of a percentage. Leeson made a note of it. MORGAN noted that, as written, a potted plant would count as an architectural feature in 4.4. Sloman agreed.

SANFORD asked for clarification of 4.2 and 4.2-a, which seem to refer to both windows and doors. Suter noted the wording contains an error, which staff will correct.

SCHULTE said the contents of 4.5 might not need to apply to recessed entries referenced in 4.4-c. Staff made a note of it.

5. 0. Front Yards, page 13. MORGAN suggested that “front yards” be added to the glossary. Sloman explained that the terms in this glossary are additive to the definitions that already exist in the IMC. Staff will review what appears in the IMC definitions and this glossary.

PRICE asked for clarification about setbacks. Is there no defined setback that applies here, he asked. Sloman replied yes; every zone in the City has a defined front setback. Beyond that, there is no contextual setback, she continued, and gave examples. PRICE asked, are there provisions for depth and width of a porch beyond the setback, which would also promote some of the ground-level, human-scale features that the regulations are seeking. It is an interesting point, Sloman replied, to think about whether people could build a porch if the building is right on the setback. Suter noted a lot of Olde Town houses have setbacks greater than 10 feet.

PRICE said regulations about the front porch are arguably the most critical piece of these guidelines. He suggested ensuring a provision for making an adjustment of standards on front porches down the road if needed. Suter agreed, and said it might be worth adding standards to say if the lot and site have constraints, there can be exceptions for the front porch. We can explore that further, she said.

SANFORD said maybe this section should be re-titled “front yard and fences,” and said perhaps fence material should also be addressed, such as chain-link fences. Suter replied we discussed that, but felt the existing code did enough to provide prohibitions, such as barbed wire. We also heard that people want flexibility about fences. Sloman said we will look into that and confirm whether chain-link fences are specified.

MORGAN on the 50-percent impervious surface limitation in 5.2, does that mean an entire front yard could be hardscape surface for seating and dining. Leeson replied only 50 percent of the entire lot could be impervious. MORGAN referred to how the proposed regulations are written, and Sloman replied staff can look at that section for clarity.

BRENNAN referred to the discussion of allowing exceptions for front porches to extend beyond the setback. That can get tricky if the setback is only ten feet, he continued, and could block views and create conflict within a neighborhood as redevelopment occurs. He continued his view is that exceptions into required setbacks should be approached with caution, particularly if the results are oriented toward the street.

SCHULTE agreed with comments made by BRENNAN and PRICE. He said flexibility to add a porch is good, but restrictions are needed as well, and gave examples. The design of a porch

would be a factor as well. He asked for clarification on privacy fences beyond four feet, as referenced in 5.3. Suter replied privacy fences beyond four feet would be permitted as long as they are within the ten-foot setback and the front porch and entry are visible from the street. SCHULTE suggested that “high” be added to “privacy fence” in item C, “Privacy fence must be set back from the front façade,” on that page. Sloman made a note of it, and said the illustration shown is correct. We will review this to make sure the words match the illustration and the intent.

6.0. Driveways and Garages, pages 14-17. PRICE suggested that, where a garage is double-wide, that two single garage doors be specified instead of one wide expanse. Suter made a note of it. Sloman noted that, in the Highlands urban village development, a single door was required where garages faced the front. SANFORD noted that on page 15, the photo at the left shows no window on the main floor. Suter explained the photo was meant to show an example of a constrained lot. MORGAN agreed including that photo is confusing. He also noted that some of the driveway examples shown appear to be less than the 18 feet specified in 6.5-e. He asked is 18 feet a workable regulation. Sloman replied the regulations should clarify that 18 feet is not required for lots with access from the alley. The concern with lots with access from the street is that driveways less than 18 feet could allow vehicles to hang off the property, impeding fire and emergency vehicle access. BRENNAN noted that zoning setbacks of 10 feet plus an 18-foot minimum driveway could result in even further constraints on tight lots. Sloman agreed it could be problematic, especially for pie-shaped lots that are narrow in front.

SANFORD said on 6.4, it is unclear what “may” means in the statement, “The driveway... may not be the only paved connection.” Sloman said it means “must not be,” and made a note of it.

SCHULTE said looking at the first image on the left of page 14, it might be good to clarify how the impervious surface there impacts the driveway. Leeson noted the driveway does count toward the impervious surface calculation for the front yard. Niven said that’s a good point. If the intent is to push the garage toward the back of the lot, and the driveway has to reach all the way to the garage, then the layout may exceed the 50-percent impervious surface standard. Staff will take a closer look at that, he added

Additions and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Leeson noted that comments received from Nancy Davidson will be addressed in the next agenda packet. She posed three questions about additions and ADUs on which staff is seeking comments: Do you want to regulate additions and ADUS; if so, to what extent; and when should existing structures be required to come into compliance.

SANFORD said in the community and Council discussions, it appeared that affordability was quite an important factor in encouraging and regulating ADUs. For that reason, he continued, he would caution against too much regulation. VOISS said he thinks any additional dwelling units should be in at least some compliance with the original structure. Some of the Olde Town lots are quite small, he continued, and without some relationship to the main building, could become an eyesore. LEWIS agreed with VOISS. She said she understands the need to balance affordability and minimal requirements with preserving character, and suggested that perhaps additions and ADUs be regulated separately, with different measures for success. Sloman noted that ADUs could be located in, say, the back yard and not be visible from the front yard. Staff needs to explore this further, she added. LEWIS said in a tight community with small lots, any new addition is unlikely to remain unseen. MORGAN agreed with the idea that there is a

significant difference between ADUs and additions, and said additions need to be integrated into the existing structure. PRICE asked are ADUs allowed within homes. Leeson replied yes.

PRICE noted the issue could become quite complex if the addition is, say, a second story. He said one question to ask is whether the addition extends the economic life of the building, with an established threshold for determining whether or not it is an addition. Even so, he continued, it is likely to be a “gray area” that will be administered somewhat at the discretion of staff. BRENNAN agreed that it would be useful to have some kind of trigger so that if a substantial remodel crossed a certain threshold, the regulations for an addition would kick in. SCHULTE said he agrees that additions should have additional regulations than ADUs. SANFORD noted a comment was received from the public about when the regulations for an addition would apply if redevelopment occurred. It is essential for the City to be clear about when the regulations for an addition would become applicable, he added.

SOWA added in his view, the point of having these architectural standards is to maintain the eclectic character of Olde Town. So if a remodel isn't changing the basic form or function of the building, then no regulation is needed; but once that is changed, then new regulations should apply.

Leeson noted the next step is for staff to do some additional research, make changes to the draft, and bring it to PPC later this fall for additional discussion. Commissioners complimented staff on a good presentation and good work.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, SOWA adjourned the meeting at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary

NOTE: Due to the Governor's Proclamation 20-28 related to the COVID-19 emergency and open public meetings, this meeting was held remotely. Participation and listening options were provided in the meeting agenda