

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH**  
**Economic Vitality Commission**

6:00 PM  
 January 16, 2024

**MINUTES**

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th Ave.  
 NW, Issaquah

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

Chris Reichley, Chair  
 Ashwin Muthuvenkataraman, Vice Chair  
 Thomas Brown  
 Jennifer Larson  
 Joan Probala  
 Kymberly Lee  
 AJ Taylor  
 Christy Garrard  
 Landon Halverson

*Administration/Staff:*

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development  
 Manager  
 Farel Otieno, Economic Development  
 Coordinator  
 Juliana da Cruz, Economic Development  
 Coordinator

Art Freas, Alternate  
 Nicoleta Mocanu, Alternate  
 Anuradha Tadepalli, Alternate

**CALL TO ORDER**

PPC Chair Voiss called the meeting to order at 6:38. The Planning Policy Commission does have a quorum and the EVC does not have a quorum

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of December 13, 2023

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Connie Marsh provided comments regarding the Comprehensive Plan and the need for a summary cover document.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- a)  
**Public Hearing for the Pioneer Program**  
*Presented by:*  
*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager*

Chair Voiss opened the public hearing.

Jen Davis Hayes began an overview presentation of the proposed Pioneer Program and the staff recommendation to allow two pioneer projects in the urban core and the mixed use zone in Issaquah. Recommending approval of proposed amendment to create the Central Issaquah Pioneer Program by amending the IMC. The Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding the staff recommendation.

Chair Voiss opened public comment for the Public Hearing. Bryan Runberg representing ownership and potential design for the Red Robin site in Pickering Place in the Urban Core and is a potential candidate for the Pioneer Program. He noted that this program is notable for its desire for fulfilling the Central Issaquah plan. He feels that his potential project is a great candidate for the Pioneer Program and did research with ARCH and with Jen Davis Hayes about which models would meet pencil for them. He noted that the 80% MFT is known by lending organizations as an attainable model. Bryan noted that he would have preference for model two, 80% MFT based on yield on cost and because it yields more units. He expressed his general support for the Pioneer Program but asked that the Commission consider making the two years to execute the program into a three year period to execute the program.

Connie Marsh spoke to suggest that Issaquah is ahead of its requirements for housing and well ahead of the other peer cities in providing housing quantity. She does not support using the MFTE to support growth of housing before the market is organically ready for it. Connie also indicated that the code language proposed is not understandable. She urged further specification regarding the language in the code and suggested that the application for the Pioneer Program be made public prior to the vote on this item.

Jim Rivard spoke on behalf of his development agency and suggested that Issaquah has created fewer housing units in its Central Issaquah core than other peer communities have produced in their urban cores, due to the existence of the MFTE program in other peer communities. He stated that Issaquah's requirements as they stand now are much more punitive and difficult to work with for lenders. Jim expressed his view that Issaquah's taxpayers are effectively subsidizing the MFTE program in other communities in King County who are taking advantage of the program, because a larger portion of the foregone tax revenue under the MFTE go to the county than to the City.

The public hearing closed at 7:29 p.m.

The Economic Vitality Commission then began deliberation regarding the merits of the program. Because the EVC does not have a quorum, the EVC was unable to give a formal recommendation.

Commissioner Lee stated that we would be remiss to ignore the comments of the optionality of different levels of AMI from developers, given the goal of this program is to facilitate the ease of development for that community. She is in support of including both options and allowing the developer to elect which option would be better. She advocated for tightening up some of the language, particularly around the validity and suggested lengthening the approval process to three years.

Chair Reichley agreed with Commissioner Lee's suggestion to include both options which could potentially yield more units, which is the primary objective of this program.

Commissioner Tadepalli also agreed with the idea of having multiple options, but that we probably know where developers will land on those options, given the engagement we've received from them. She urged the Development Commission to consider that the infrastructure for this growth be planned and provided for in the Central Issaquah Plan.

Commissioner Larson spoke in favor of multiple options but was primarily in favor of the 60% option.

The EVC portion of the meeting ended.

## **OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting is currently scheduled for January 16, 2024.

### **INQUIRIES**

Please contact Jen Davis Hayes at (425) 837-3414 or [jenh@issaquahwa.gov](mailto:jenh@issaquahwa.gov).

-----

*Note: Times listed for meetings topics are approximate and items are subject to change.*

*(A) Action, (D) Discussion, (I) Information*