

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

July 10, 2014

City Hall South  
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way  
Issaquah, WA 98027

**PPC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Joan Probala, Chair  
Laurel Hubert  
Chantal Stevens  
Justin Walsh  
Mike Foss, Alt.  
Susan Kolwitz, Alt.  
Paul Weller, Alt.

**STAFF PRESENT**

Trish Heinonen, Policy Planning Manager

**CALL TO ORDER**

PROBALA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOVED BY WALSH, SECONDED BY WELLER, that minutes of the PPC meeting on June 26, 2014, be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE: Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Element**

Heinonen made staff's presentation, referring to the proposed draft of the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Element (Parks Element) in Exhibit A-1. She explained the process for tonight's discussion. The goal for tonight's meeting is to further the Commission's understanding of the Parks Element and to get comments from PPC members on the appropriate goals and policies to be included in the next version of the element for PPC's review.

She continued her presentation with the state requirements that Issaquah's Parks Plan, which is due in 2015, must meet in order to meet the state's planning requirements and be eligible for grants and other funding.

She continued with an explanation of how the City's Parks Plan and the Parks Element in the Comprehensive Plan complement each other. She explained that a parks planning position for the City is currently unfilled, so work on the Parks Plan has not yet started. She reviewed the hierarchy within each element (Goal, Policies, and Implementation). She also spoke as to why parks are important and the overall status of parks and open space in Issaquah.

**Introduction and Vision (page 8).** Heinonen presented the information in the agenda packet on the Introduction and Vision.

**State Requirements (page 9).** Heinonen summarized what is required by the State to be included in the Parks Element under the Growth Management Act (GMA).

**Goals and Policies (page 9).** Heinonen explained the information on Park Goal A, No Net Park Loss and Future Generations. Probala said this seems more like two goals, not just one

goal, specifically a goal to ensure no net loss in parks and a goal to provide additional park and recreation facilities as the City grows. She said these are both important concepts and to her, they each deserve to be a goal. The other Commissioners agreed. WALSH asked how “no net loss” is defined. Heinonen gave background on how the Council has used a policy of “no net loss” in landscaping on Gilman Blvd., for example, and said it would function similarly for parks. She explained when a developer wanted to put in a left-hand turn lane onto Gilman Blvd., a policy of “no net loss” in landscaping would be applied so that any trees or greenery that had to be removed would be replaced so that no net loss of landscaping was achieved. WALSH suggested perhaps the policy on no net park loss needs some enunciation in the Element. Heinonen said she will work on it.

STEVENS said her concern is about what “loss” means in this context. She noted that a park can function in many ways; as habitat, for recreation, and so on, and the loss of a park’s surface area is just one way to experience a loss. She asked whether the City has an inventory of its parks by function which could be used to ensure that no net loss of park functions was achieved. Heinonen replied yes, the City does have an inventory of its parks that includes square footage, number of soccer fields, picnic tables, and so on as part of its level of service (LOS) inventory. She said the inventory indicates what the City currently has in terms of parks and what it projects it will need in ten years. WALSH added that the current wording of “no net loss” does not address the loss of recreational services. Heinonen said she will ask the Parks Department to review and comment on that point.

PROBALA asked will all the comments underneath Goal A be included in the policies. Heinonen replied yes; those comments can be part of the discussion under the new goal on no net park loss. WELLER asked will the policy also include the City’s park LOS, amount of open space, and so on. Heinonen said that will be in the inventory, whereas these two goals will state that the policy is to not decrease the parks that the City has now and to increase the City’s parks as the City’s population increases.

STEVENS gave her perspective on the need for parks to be used more creatively and in more ecologically friendly ways instead of just thinking of parks as expanses of lawn. She said in her mind, lawns mean the need for extensive use of chemicals, fertilizers, and so on, without really offering much. She said just thinking of parks in terms of being just an open grassy area seems like a real waste of opportunities.

WALSH asked whether the two new goals should reference ecological sustainability, such as utilizing native plants, low-water plantings, and so on. Heinonen noted the next goal, Stewardship and Balance, is intended to address that, and continued her presentation on Park Goal B, Stewardship and Balance. WALSH suggested splitting out “historic and cultural” from the other references to conservation of natural resources. Heinonen made a note of it.

HUBERT asked whether the City has a policy about making sure the machines it uses to care for parks, such as leaf blowers and lawn mowers, are keeping up with alternatives to gas-powered equipment. KOLWITZ noted the difficulty of disposing of batteries can make some of those alternatives as problematic as using gas-powered equipment. STEVENS noted the City has a goal of reducing its own carbon emissions, and asked would that also apply to its maintenance equipment. Heinonen replied yes, and said she will ask staff in the City’s sustainability program for more details about that.

She continued with Park Goal C, Partnerships and Regional Coordination, and explained the thinking in this draft behind putting all partnerships into one goal and not separating them.

WALSH suggested that the goal could refer to “local, state, federal, and regional agencies” and to “non-governmental resources,” which would eliminate the need to include the second sentence in the goal (“Continue to partner with the Issaquah School District, businesses, developers, non-profit organizations, user groups and neighborhood groups...”).

FOSS said he respectfully disagrees with that suggestion, and sees no good reason not to name the potential partners. WELLER said he tends to agree, and thinks the partnership with the School District is important enough that it should be specifically called out. He gave an example from his own experience where parks on school property are not open for kids to use when school is not in session. KOLWITZ said her perception is that none of us want to end up excluding any organization or groups, and said she favors some language that would be sure no group is excluded. WALSH said that was his concern as well. He suggested adding “other resources” after “neighborhood groups.” PROBALA suggested “entities” instead of “groups.” Heinonen asked whether those changes were satisfactory with all PPC members, and members indicated they were.

PROBALA said the City has different processes for its partnership efforts with state, regional, federal, and local agencies and with other organizations, and said she is assuming that there will be more specific information in the policies, such as more details about the policies for seeking grant funding from the state. Heinonen replied that is correct.

**Implementation (page 10).** Heinonen concluded her presentation.

STEVENS asked whether trails should be addressed as a separate goal. Heinonen replied trails would be included as part of the no net loss goal, but could be called out specifically. STEVENS said many trails are multi-jurisdictional, and asked would this policy apply only to City trails. Heinonen replied trails would be part of the City’s parks LOS. STEVENS said she would like to see a policy under the new Goal A that addresses trails. WALSH said in looking at the two new goals to be made from Goal A, each of the new goals should include all the elements that are now in Goal A. PROBALA agreed, and said if not in the goals themselves, then at least in the policies. She said she also likes the inclusion of “trail connections” in the language because it is important to recognize the connections that allow people to access the regional and multi-jurisdiction trails.

STEVENS asked whether any analyses have been done about equity issues related to parks, such as more parks in affluent neighborhoods. Heinonen said yes; when the City developed the Central Issaquah Plan, for example, regulations were included to require developers to create larger central parks within walking distance in recognition that the central City currently lacks those kinds of spaces. She said the City is aware that not all neighborhoods have parks to which residents can easily reach on foot or by bicycle, and uses that information in making development and permit decisions. STEVENS said she would like to see equitable distribution included somewhere in the goal language. Heinonen made a note of it.

Heinonen discussed the next steps in reviewing the Parks Element. PROBALA asked what will be the City’s process for developing the Parks Plan. Heinonen replied the Parks Plan deadline is 2015, the same as the Comprehensive Plan update, so staff will be working with the yet-to-be-hired parks planner to find out how to best combine our efforts so that we can meet our respective deadlines. PROBALA asked will PPC be reviewing this Element again. Heinonen replied yes, hopefully in the fall and before the public hearing at the end of the year. PROBALA said she would like PPC to receive an outline of where Parks now exist in the City, and asked does something like that already exist. Heinonen said yes, there is one in the current

Comprehensive Plan, although it is about five years old. An updated map will be part of the new Parks Plan as well as projections for parks ten years into the future, she added. She said she will also invite members of the Parks Commission to attend the PPC meeting when the Parks Element is next discussed.

**OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADJOURN**

Heinonen noted the July 24, 2014 PPC meeting is cancelled due to scheduling conflicts with staff training. The August PPC meetings will be held on August 14 and 28, she noted.

PROBALA said at the last PPC meeting, she asked that the current TIP (Transportation Improvement Projects) list and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) list be presented to PPC, with a short explanation of each. Heinonen made a note of it.

With no further business to conduct, PROBALA adjourned the meeting at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe  
Recording Secretary