

Planning Policy Commission
8-25-16

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

August 25, 2016

City Hall South
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way
Issaquah, WA 98027

PPC MEMBERS PRESENT

Joan Probala, Chair
Carl Swedberg, Vice Chair
Ron Faul
Troy Rahmig
Justin Walsh
Salim Juma, Alt.

STAFF PRESENT

Megan Curtis-Murphy, Sustainability Coordinator
Trish Heinonen, Long-Range Planning Manager
David Fujimoto, Sustainability Director

CALL TO ORDER

PROBALA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY FAUL, SECONDED BY RAHMIG that minutes of the PPC meeting on August 11, 2016 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED BY THE UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL PPC MEMBERS PRESENT.

2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS—Amendment #4, Preview of Sustainability Indicators Update

Heinonen noted that tonight is a preview of proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan, Amendment #4, which will be included in the docket of proposed changes to be discussed at PPC's public hearing in October. Tonight's discussion is to get everyone up to speed with proposed changes in the amendment prior to the public hearing, she clarified.

Curtis-Murphy made staff's presentation. She gave an update on the City's sustainability indicators, noting that the City collects the data on the indicators every other year. She explained what the indicators are and gave some background as to how and why they were established. She gave more details about the City's adopted vision and principles for sustainability, and gave highlights from each of eight key sustainability themes. During her presentation, Commissioners asked questions and made comments, summarized below.

Basic Needs

WALSH asked how the City's community safety data compares with other jurisdictions' data. Curtis-Murphy said we hope to get more comparison data between cities, and explained that different ways of reporting can make apples-to-apples comparisons difficult. She said the City's Police Department will be studying more ways to get comparative data. WALSH asked whether any public safety data is available from the court system, for example, in addition to crime data from the Police Department. Curtis-Murphy gave some background on how the indicators were established in 2009, and said we do have anecdotal data from a recent citizen survey that samples residents' opinions on community safety. She cited statistics from that survey.

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WALSH asked how data on food bank usage was generated and whether data from the state and other agencies was also examined. Curtis-Murphy replied she would have to check on the exact method used for gathering data on food bank usage.

WALSH asked whether any of the indicators have been updated, contracted, or expanded since they were originally developed. Curtis-Murphy said when the Sounding Board came up with the indicators in 2009, they had to select from among a large number of items to use as indicators. Some of these targets have been updated since they were originally developed in 2009, but with the exception of the quality of life indicator, the measurements have not been updated.

FAUL asked whether it is possible to dive down into these statistics and find the sources and more details of what we see here. Curtis-Murphy replied yes, and said she will follow up with FAUL to provide any data he would like to see.

FAUL asked for more clarification of the data on the housing affordability gap. Curtis-Murphy said we are still finishing up work on that item, so while it is not being covered tonight, we will have data available for the Commission at the public hearing in September.

WALSH noted that the target for community health is “100 percent of our adult population to be insured.” He continued the policy should be a target of 100 percent of residents insured which would include children as well. Generally speaking, he said, he would like to see the housing affordability gap category track homelessness as an indicator, and use data from sources such as how many residents are using Section 8 housing. Heinonen said the City will be looking at the City’s housing issues in more depth later this year as it develops a housing strategy.

Fujimoto added that the Sounding Board selected indicators to measure the City’s long-term progress in reaching its targets, but the indicators are themselves a work in progress. He said we welcome feedback from PPC on the indicators and the data we are using for measuring how well we are doing. He said this year, for the first time, the City participated in a one-night count of the number of homeless people in King County, but the reporting was done on a regional basis and not on an individual city basis. He said that is an example of the problems we sometimes encounter in finding reliable, accurate local data that can be used on a multi-year basis.

Business Climate

WALSH asked whether the City has done any analysis of whether to include comparative statistics on business diversity, either with other jurisdictions or on a statewide basis. Curtis-Murphy said no, but that is a good point for inclusion in future updates. WALSH asked whether the data has been split out between government and non-government jobs in the category of “employment by sector.” Curtis-Murphy said that data is generated and provided to us by the state. The largest category of jobs in our City is service sector jobs, she noted, which encompasses a wide range of employment. PROBALA said many small businesses are single-person home businesses, which don’t necessarily require hiring employees. Is that kind of data available, she asked. WALSH agreed, and said it would be good to have data about business licenses versus the number of employees that are included in those business licenses. Curtis-Murphy said she didn’t think that information was available now but wasn’t sure, and made a note of it.

FAUL asked for clarification of the retail sector data on page 11 of 27. Curtis-Murphy explained the retail sector now accounts for about 14 percent of employment in Issaquah, which is less than the 18 percent level the City reached in 2008.

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WALSH asked on the job-housing balance ratio, what is considered the ideal. From the data given, it appears that the ideal ratio is 1.0. Curtis-Murphy said the City doesn't have a specific target. It does track the trend over time, and King County has discussed establishing targets, but there is no established target now. WALSH said if the housing target is to add 5,750 homes but the job target is to add 20,000 jobs, how can those two targets exist in the same plan. Heinonen explained that the City's location near I-90 means that the City will likely always have more jobs and services than would otherwise be expected, and we are trying to get closer to the 1.0 ratio with our Central Issaquah Plan, but we don't have control over the housing market. She continued the target for housing is set by the state as part of the Growth Management Act. WALSH asked can the City exceed that target if it so chooses. Heinonen replied politically speaking, it would not be in the City's best interest to exceed the target, because another set of targets will be coming from the state in the next few years. Our capacity may be higher than the target the state sets for us, but we wouldn't want to exceed the target. She said the City is also doing a study on mixed-use as another way to get the numbers more in line than they are now.

WALSH suggested using a measure of average commute times, specifically from census data, as another way to measure the job-housing balance. The Commission continued to discuss how inclusion as a regional growth center by PSRC (Puget Sound Regional Council) impacted the City's jobs and housing targets. PROBALA said her recollection was that the Central Issaquah Plan was approved before the City decided to apply to become a regional growth center. Heinonen said she will check the numbers that were used in the original Central Issaquah Plan EIS and send them to Commissioners.

FAULL asked how the data can be projected until the end of 2016. Heinonen said the quarterly monitoring report prepared in July indicates that there are 900 housing units in the pipeline and how many others are coming. FAUL said he would be interested in seeing that information. Heinonen explained how to find the monitoring report on the City's website.

Community Awareness and Stewardship

Education

FAUL said 10 percent of students who responded to the Healthy Youth survey indicated they do not feel safe. Do we know why, he asked. Curtis-Murphy said there are several questions in that survey that speak to that, such as bullying, drug use, and problems at home. FAUL said he would like to have those details so he could study them more closely.

WALSH asked how does the City's data on substance abuse rates compare to the state as a whole or to other jurisdictions. Curtis-Murphy said the state administers the Healthy Youth survey, and that information is available online from the state.

Green, Compact and Mixed-Use Development

Natural Areas and Open Space

FAUL asked whether natural areas and open space are projected out to 2030. Curtis-Murphy said the City's Parks Department is undergoing a long-range planning effort now. Heinonen asked whether the numbers reflect recent additions such as the annexation of Sammamish State Park, open space at Talus, and so on. Curtis-Murphy replied yes, and noted that the parks and open space figures are grouped together.

WALSH asked in gathering data for the food grown locally category, has the City has done any outreach to retailers who also participate with local food producers and vendors, such as PPC,

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Fred Meyer and so on. Curtis-Murphy replied we haven't done that specifically, but it would be a good way to get a fuller picture of local food availability and consumption. PROBALA asked for more details about how "local farmer" is defined in terms of distance. Curtis-Murphy replied we don't use a specific mileage, but it's an interesting point.

Mobility

FAUL asked is the City looking at other possibilities of reducing its carbon footprint, such as adding trees. Curtis-Murphy noted the City does have a tree canopy goal of 51 percent. Data from a recent aerial study should be available soon, she continued, and will allow us to update our latest data, which indicated that the City was at 47 percent canopy. FAUL spoke in favor of using natural resources, such as trees, to mitigate the pollution that is caused by development. Fujimoto said that approach is definitely part of the equation, and said transforming virgin forestland to development does have an impact despite mitigation.

Waste/Resource Use

FAUL spoke in favor of looking at implementing wind energy citywide, and asked could that be considered. Curtis-Murphy said the City will be looking at several options during the sustainability action strategy phase. Some studies of alternate sources of energy such as wind and solar, as well as ways to bring about behavioral changes, have already been done, she added. The Commission continued its discussion of the viability of implementing wind energy citywide.

WALSH noted the data given for the diversion of waste generation rate is several years old, and asked whether any more recent data is available. Curtis-Murphy replied the rate has been between 40 and 44 percent for the last several years; the multi-family segment went to about 24 percent last year. WALSH said the City of Seattle has incentives to identify where waste is being improperly diverted in multi-family developments, and also requires mandatory composting. Curtis-Murphy said the City's emphasis to date has been on implementing outreach and education programs such as reducing food waste, and has not approved any ordinances that would require people to reduce waste or participate in composting. WALSH asked have any other jurisdictions in King County met the 55 percent diversion. Curtis-Murphy replied yes, Seattle has; most of the smaller cities are not meeting the target at this time, and Issaquah is doing fairly well in comparison. RAHMIG noted it becomes an issue of changing individual behavior. Curtis-Murphy noted about half of the City's multi-family buildings do have composting programs in place. The City is actively trying to get the others on board, and troubleshoots obstacles and problems that come up. WALSH asked does the City have any data on which buildings are not participating. Curtis-Murphy replied no, we don't have that specific information.

PROBALA said the City would have to give people a reason to participate, and asked have you thought about giving people incentives, getting more people involved, using signs and activities that would show people how to compost, and so on. Curtis-Murphy said yes, the City has had a few programs, such as outreach at farmers markets, a film series about waste reduction, the Too Good to Waste program, and so on. WALSH asked does the City also reach out to those who are not composting. Curtis-Murphy replied yes, the City reaches out to them every year, and some programs are given a discount on their overall bill if they participate in certain programs. FAUL asked why they do not participate. Curtis-Murphy replied some have had problems with placement of composting equipment, have found that the equipment is not being used much, have had some complaints about smell, and so on. The City tries to work with them to troubleshoot any issues before they become a problem.

She concluded her presentation with a graphic entitled "Green Scenes."

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RAHMIG noted the percentage of homes in the City that are Built Green and LEED certified is higher higher than elsewhere in King County, possibly because of all the new construction here. He continued are there requirements in the City's code that require new developments to meet standards for water use, energy, and so on. Curtis-Murphy replied the City does not have a specific target, although the City's development agreement with the Highlands, for example, does include green certified requirements. In addition, the City has incentives for developers to build green buildings in place, and is looking at additional ways to provide incentives for developers to do so.

RAHMIG asked whether an update to the themes is planned, and if so, would it come to PPC and/or other groups for comment. Curtis-Murphy replied the process to update the themes has not been fleshed out yet, but it would definitely include hearing from the public and commissions, including PPC. WALSH said in addition to getting the public's input, staff and members of the commissions are a good resource for knowing about the various sources of data out there that could be used as measurements. Curtis-Murphy gave her perspective on the 2009 process to develop the indicators. Heinonen added the participants in the process were careful to make sure that the data sources would be there year to year so that comparisons could be made accurately and constantly over time. We also wanted to be sure the indicators were added to the Comp Plan last year specifically in order to get it on PPC's work plan every year.

FAUL asked how the data presented tonight could be accessed online. Curtis-Murphy said some of the data is coming from different partners and departments, but staff will work with Heinonen to make it all available to PPC members. Heinonen noted the original sustainability document from 2009 is available online from the Office of Sustainability page on the City's website.

OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADJOURN

Heinonen said the next PPC meeting, on September 22, will be a public hearing on the next round of amendments to the Central Issaquah Plan standards.

With no further business to conduct, PROBALA adjourned the meeting at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary