

Planning Policy Commission  
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**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

July 13, 2017

City Hall South  
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way  
Issaquah, WA 98027

**PPC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Joan Probala, Chair  
Ron Faul, Vice Chair  
Victoria Hunt, Alt.  
Joy Lewis  
AJ McGauley, Alt.  
Jon Stob  
Lindsey Walsh

**STAFF PRESENT**

Trish Heinonen, Long-Range Planning Manager  
Jennifer R. Woods, Associate Planner  
Keith Niven, Economic Dev. and Dev. Services Manager

**CALL TO ORDER**

PROBALA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOVED BY HUNT, SECONDED BY WALSH that minutes of the PPC meeting on June 22, 2017 be approved.

HUNT noted that she was not included as being present in the minutes of the June 22 meeting, and asked that it be corrected. FAUL noted a correction on page 11 of 38 to the sentence beginning, "We have enough to make the assessment...", specifically that the word "retail" be eliminated in that sentence, resulting in "...residential, office, retail and hotel."

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the minutes of the PPC meeting on June 22, 2017 as corrected.

**PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ISSAQUAH MUNICIPAL CODE AND CENTRAL ISSAQUAH STANDARDS: Urban Schools and Government Facilities**

PROBALA welcomed members of the audience to the public hearing. At PROBALA's request, Woods explained exactly what is being discussed tonight, specifically a presentation and request for a recommendation by PPC on code amendments to the Issaquah Municipal Code and Central Issaquah Standards for urban schools and government facilities. She explained that no development is being proposed as part of this code amendment discussion tonight, nor is any specific rezoning of any parcels being proposed. She said the annexation of the King County Island is also not part of the discussion tonight, and gave the schedule for when the Council will address that issue.

She continued with staff's presentation on the proposed schedule for seeking approval of the proposed amendments under discussion tonight, leading to Council approval on September 18.

She referred to a map and explained that property owners within 300 feet of property zoned CF-F received a letter from the City (nearly 3,000 were mailed) about the proposed amendments. She continued with a working definition of "urban schools" and "government facilities." She gave the purpose of the code amendments, including the School District's needs as well as the City's.

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She described how the new code would be applied. She described the applicability of the proposed code, and exactly what kind of facilities (new school buildings and non-conforming expansions of existing schools, as well as government facilities) would be affected.

McGAULEY said so essentially these proposed amendments would change how school facilities are developed, not whether or not any specific school building could be built. Woods replied that is essentially correct. Schools are allowed in parcels designated as CF-F, and no open space or other specific parcel is being proposed for a school building as a part of these amendments.

Woods continued her presentation with a comparison of how the proposed code would apply vs. the existing code, as detailed in the agenda packet, including levels of review; development standards; minimum/maximum FAR (Floor Area Ratio) requirements; setbacks; building height; impervious surface percentage; other development and design requirements; landscape and trees; tree retention requirement; minimum tree density; tree replacement; and structured parking landscape.

PROBALA asked how these numbers were derived. Woods explained the numbers were developed in working sessions between the City and the Issaquah School District to try to figure out exactly what the School District needs to fulfill their program requirements and how the City's zoning regulations impact the School District's ability to meet those needs. Niven added the City Council and the School Board began meeting several years ago to plan for growth, and one of the outcomes of those meetings was that the City's current zoning code does not accommodate new schools very well. So these amendments are the result of the School District's request that the City review its code to ensure land is able to be used by the District at maximum efficiency.

McGAULEY asked for clarification as to whether any zoning is being proposed for change in these amendments. Woods replied no, the amendments do not propose any zoning changes, but they would establish new standards for schools and government facilities in CF-F parcels. McGAULEY asked so it would require a separate action from what is being proposed today to change the zoning of a specific parcel to CF-F in order to accommodate a school. Woods replied that is correct.

STOB asked what is the policy basis for a discussion on urban schools, including what is contained in these amendments. Woods referred to a slide that delineated the applicable King County Policies on schools, and summarized the contents of that policy. She said the other City policies that provoked the School District's request that the City review its policies are contained in the Comprehensive Plan. STOB said so the King County Policy is the overarching policy, but is there anything specific in the City's policies that speak to urban schools specifically. Woods said the City does not have that level of specificity in the City's planning documents, but does have policies that commit the City to helping the School District in ways such as this one.

McGAULEY said it seems that the School District has a strategic vision to accommodate growth in its planning for urban schools, but the City does not. PROBALA noted any new schools would have to be within the City's urban growth boundary. McGAULEY said so no part of the City, given that it was within the urban growth boundary, would be off limits for the purpose of developing a school. Niven added the School District would have to seek a rezone and get a permit, as well as acquire any land if it does not already own the land, for the purpose of developing a school, and would be required to follow a lengthy public process.

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WALSH asked have there been any meetings with the community asking about their vision for urban schools, and exploring how that vision matches with the School District's needs. McGAULEY added tonight's meeting is such an opportunity. WALSH said she was thinking more of whether there had been outreach to PTAs and other school-related audiences about their vision for urban schools. McGAULEY asked staff whether the term "urban school" is just a way of referring to a school that is more density-oriented and that uses land more efficiently given that available land has become scarce. Woods replied that is correct.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

PROBALA opened the meeting for public comment at 7:10 PM.

Ronald Lebeiko, 716 7th NW, Issaquah, said his question is how these amendments might apply to "other government facilities," such as a recycling center.

McGAULEY asked for clarification that the proposed amendments would only apply to public schools. Niven replied no; the way they are proposed, they would apply to both other government facilities and public schools. He continued the City does not have any current plans to build any government facilities in any CF-F zones, and the primary driver for the Administration in proposing these amendments is schools, not government facilities. He added that staff has no problem with removing "other government facilities" from what is being proposed tonight if the Commission so chooses.

Hailstone Hooker, 320 NW Holly Street, Issaquah, referred to the bridge across the Issaquah Creek to Holly Street so kids can safely cross. He said he doesn't know what planning has been done for the parking lot there, but is concerned about all the traffic that will be going in and out of the site. He said he would like to see some planning or design documents so he can visualize what will take place there.

PROBALA said that issue, while an important one that needs to be addressed, is not under discussion tonight, and asked staff to follow-up with Mr. Hooker. Niven explained the School District's responsibilities for meeting all standards and regulations in its planning documents, which would be submitted to the City and be part of a public process, including review by the Development Commission.

Susan Hass, 19524 SE 24th Place, Sammamish, spoke against the amendment, saying that it has good intentions and a positive direction but should have included more public involvement. She spoke about her volunteer work with Providence Heights, and said the proposed amendments would capture our precious green open space and treed hillsides in ways that are totally inappropriate. She said those spaces need to be kept as they are, and that CF-OS would be a better designation for them. She continued if the interest is in creating more urban school capacity, then that capacity needs to be in places that are already cleared and graded. She said she thinks the proposed changes in tree retention and setback requirements are disastrous and that maximum building heights need to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Lindy Hisatomi, 26 Sunset Ct. NW, said these amendments appear to be an attempt to put looser zoning restrictions on green space areas, such as cemeteries. She said she appreciates the City's need to meet the Issaquah School District's needs for more schools but it is inappropriate to spread the proposed changes for both schools and other government facilities out across the City. She said she would favor having the amendments state more concisely that the changes would apply to parcels for schools only.

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Kate Lizotte, 380 SE Darst Street, said she agrees that “schools” and “other government facilities” don’t match up well, and should be uncoupled. She said her concerns include the height of buildings, which could block views, and lack of specifics about how the changes would impact sidewalks and egress/ingress for any new school sites.

Linda Krumins, Mt. Vernon, Washington, said she taught in the Issaquah School District for many years and was a resident of Issaquah when there were no stop lights in the City. Time has changed things, she continued. The City will continue to change whether we want it to or not, and change can be uncomfortable. She said she is sympathetic to the School District’s space problem, and said she knows from first-hand experience how difficult it is to teach in portables and crowded schools. She said she favors the amendments if they will help alleviate overcrowded classrooms.

Jake Kuper, CFO for the Issaquah School District, said conversations like this one can be frustrating for him. He said the School District asked the City to change the existing code because there just isn’t enough flat space available in the City to provide the schools that the District is required by law to provide. He gave the acreage requirements for elementary, middle, and high schools. He noted the constituency is willing to pay to get excellent educations for our kids, as evidenced by the positive vote on the last school bond issue, but we are competing with some of the largest developers in the world for available space in the City. He continued the School District is responding to growth, and our new schools are full as soon as they open. He concluded we need the ability to have more dense development on both existing school properties and for new school facilities as well.

Steve Crawford, Issaquah School District Capital Facilities Director, gave more information on projected growth and the need for additional capacity in Issaquah’s public schools. He said higher density allows the School District to compact the overall footprint of our facilities, and with land as scarce as it is, we have to be creative in condensing our footprint as much as we can. He said having denser facilities also allows us to put schools closer to the neighborhoods they serve, helps with congestion issues, and results in more sustainable projects.

Lisa Callan, Issaquah School Board President, invited interested parties to attend School Board meetings and address the Board directly with their concerns. She explained the District’s public process for siting schools, and said the issue tonight is the School District’s ability to use less land in accommodating growth. She said under the proposed code, the District would have the ability to buy less land and also to be more efficient with the land we already have. She said the District respects the City’s public process and wants to engage with the community.

Lisa Milkowski, 890 Lingering Pine Lane NW, Issaquah, said this is not really an amendment about schools, although it is being characterized that way tonight. It is really about making hasty decisions that result in clear-cutting parcels of our City. She urged the Commission to think carefully about what these amendments would allow, and not to act hastily.

Tom Hufnagl, 7910 334th Ave., Issaquah, questioned whether the Lakeside Sand and Gravel property could be changed to a zone that would allow schools. He noted that it is located right next to a marijuana retail store and questioned whether that would prohibit a school from being sited there. Niven said the City does require separation between green businesses and public schools, and no change of zoning is being proposed tonight.

Donna Robinson, 180 NW Dogwood, Issaquah, encouraged the Commission to limit the proposed amendments to school facilities only, and eliminate the reference to “other

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government facilities.” She said “other government facilities” is a slippery slope and way too broad. She noted that the increase in impermeable surface to 90 percent is problematic, and referred to flooding and landslide issues in the City, county, and state over recent years. She asked where will all the water go, and noted she as a homeowner is required to have 50 percent of her lot as permeable.

Bryan Weinstein, 285 S. Bush Street, Issaquah, read from sections of the City’s code, and said in survey after survey, residents show that they value our treed hillsides and green surroundings. They also appreciate and value good schools, and voted last year for a tax increase to sustain them during this period of City growth, but accommodating that growth must be balanced with environmental excellence. When were we, the citizens, even asked whether we want to live in an urban community, he continued. The Issaquah School District now says I live in an urban environment, even though my neighborhood has bears and other wildlife. This amendment is not representative of our community or values. The applicant, Issaquah School District, needs to do better, and if they can’t comply with the City’s regulations, they should build elsewhere. Their use of the term “efficient” is a clever use of language but is wrong. We as citizens shouldn’t have to change our values because they are contrary to how the applicant chooses to operate. City Administration must also do better.

David Kappler, 255 NE Andrews Street, Issaquah, said he agrees with the points raised in correspondence from Connie Marsh to the Commission. He said staff has asserted that these amendments do not result in a “rezone” because the parcels will remain classified as CF-F, but the criteria for the parcels are being dramatically altered. So this definitely is a rezone in the sense that potential uses and the criteria for meeting code are being changed. He expressed his concern about where some of the specific CF-F sites as located, such as Clayton Springs. He said the Council’s decision to enact a moratorium was at least in part because the Central Issaquah Plan isn’t working, yet the language in these amendments was lifted from the Central Issaquah Plan documents, which is wrong and a big mistake. He said he thinks schools and other government facilities should be uncoupled, and gave examples of what could happen in various parcels in terms of siting other government facilities there. He said his confidence in the Issaquah School District as an academic institution is very high, but very low as a builder of facilities, and these amendments could result in even more negative impacts on the community.

Steve Pereira, 170 NW Dogwood Street, Issaquah, expressed his views that the School District should have to abide by the City’s existing development standards, and that these amendments are a rezone in effect if not in fact. He spoke in favor of the need to redevelop existing school properties which in turn will save green areas and allow the City to accommodate more students, and that the School District should not be contemplating building in any areas where we didn’t visualize that schools would be sited.

Karen Lee, 582 240th SE, Sammamish, spoke of her concern about the proposed increase in impervious surfaces to 90 percent, and the need to have more opportunities for citizen input and feedback on this important issue.

Emily Freete, 205 Newport Way, Issaquah, said these proposed amendments are short-sighted and extreme, and she is against their approval. She spoke of the need to protect trees and deal with steep slopes and unstable soil in order to avoid landslides and flooding. She said the School District should work within the City’s regulations and embrace the City’s land use codes. She asked the Commission to step back and look more diligently at how to achieve the School District’s growth needs. The issue here isn’t trees vs. schools, but rather the need for intelligent planning that reflects the community’s values.

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Mary Lynch, 2690 Oakcrest Drive, Issaquah, referred to a letter she sent to Commissioners in advance of the meeting, and said she supports the comments of Connie Marsh, David Kappler, and others. She said she worked on the Central Issaquah Task Force, and the Task Force asked the City to look more closely then at locating schools in more dense areas, but it didn't happen. The proposed amendments are for parcels that can't even be identified; how can you make a real judgment without knowing which parcels will be affected. She continued her comments about the need for an updated tree canopy measurement (the last one was done in 2006); how this proposal would affect the tree canopy; and the need for accountability for the tree fund. She said she thinks schools should be located in the CIP, and gave her experience from observing the Clark Elementary School location. She said she would like to see the School District and "other government facilities" have to conform to the same codes as everyone else. She spoke in favor of waiting until the work done on the City's moratorium is completed before the changes in these proposed amendments are approved.

Jake Kuper added he is hearing that some people do not want the School District to redevelop properties or develop new ones, but we have a state requirement to educate your children. It's frustrating, he continued, and we have worked very closely with real estate experts who have indicated there is no flat, graded ground just ready and available for us. He said the School District is being smart and living up to its fiduciary responsibilities by requesting these changes, which in turn will save taxpayers money. He concluded the School District has an excellent track record of building and construction. We have done an exhaustive search over a long period of time for answers to our growth issues, and there are no easy solutions. He described two incidents of imminent domain now under way in the City and the School District's plans to develop on those two properties.

Hearing no additional requests to speak, PROBALA closed the public hearing at 8:09 PM.

### **Commission Discussion**

FAUL said in his view, a clear policy on urban schools is missing. Having such a policy would help mitigate confusion and set expectations, he added. McGAULEY disagreed, and said the City doesn't build schools, the School District does.

Heinonen referred to the City's policies that relate to schools in the Comprehensive Plan, specifically in the sections on sustainability, parks, economic vitality, and services, and said in the Administration's thinking, the City does have adequate policy relating to schools. FAUL said he has read through those policies, but having a separate policy just on urban schools would set the right expectations rather than having a collection of policies spread throughout the Comprehensive Plan. He continued an overarching policy, drafted by the City and the School District, would help give direction and clarity, and help define what is an "urban school."

MOVED BY McGAULEY, SECONDED BY STOB that the proposed amendments apply just to schools and school facilities, not to "other government facilities." MOTION CARRIED BY THE MAJORITY VOTE OF ALL COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (FAUL voted in the minority).

WALSH questioned whether more community input should be sought, and suggested one approach to tonight's discussion is to address the various criteria in the proposed amendment separately. STOB agreed. McGAULEY said he doesn't view the proposed changes, except maybe the impermeability criteria, as a major rethink of existing policy. WALSH said she would like to discuss the proposed criteria for setbacks, for example, as well as the impacts of these proposed setbacks on safety. Niven added the School District spoke earlier to safety, and noted

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the School District has always put a very high emphasis on safety. Steve Crawford added that each site is different; the proposed range of setbacks from the street of 0 to 20 feet would accommodate different situations, and gave examples. He said the proposed criteria would allow the School District to compress the footprint of its facilities, be more efficient, and take up less space.

WALSH spoke in favor of reviewing each criteria to see which are of concern to Commissioners.

Niven noted that impervious surface is really a metric of drainage, and to use that criteria to somehow indicate “we want more trees” isn’t accurate. LEWIS said she has serious concerns about increasing the impervious surface maximum to 90 percent, and asked did staff consider any changes in its proposal, particularly after receiving overwhelming feedback from residents and concerned parties. Niven explained staff and the School District discussed criteria that made sense, and came up with these criteria. If the Commission chooses to ratchet down the impervious surface maximum, or modify any of the criteria for that matter, from what staff is proposing, then its recommendation to Council can reflect those judgments.

After further discussion of the need for a policy on urban schools, it was MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY WALSH that PPC recommend to City Council that the City have further discussions with the Issaquah School District to create a living, changeable policy document that addresses the issue of urban schools, including the definition of an urban school, what the community would like to see in terms of urban schools, and the School District’s projected needs for urban schools. MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL COMMISSIONERS PRESENT.

The Commissioners agreed to look at each of the criteria in the proposed amendments separately.

PROBALA noted maximum building height is partially determined by the needs of the building. Niven clarified that the use of elevators is the driver for buildings over the 65-foot limit.

Niven clarified what set-backs and build-to means, and gave examples of the consequences of siting buildings at the far end of properties. He said there are situations where an allowance would be possible, and gave examples.

STOB said one difficulty is that the Commission is being asked to vote on these numbers without knowing whether or not they are the absolute right ones. LEWIS and WALSH agreed. Niven said if the Commission is uncomfortable taking action on the proposed amendments, it can decide to take a pass on making a recommendation.

FAUL asked what about charter schools, private schools, and so on. Niven replied CF-F is given to parcels in public ownership only, so this would only apply to public education institutions.

WALSH noted tree retention also received a lot of public comment. LEWIS said she has a problem with reducing tree retention to zero as proposed, and would favor keeping the existing code on tree retention. Other Commissioners agreed.

HUNT said she has a problem with increasing the impervious surface maximum to 90 percent. Other Commissioners agreed. PROBALA asked whether 75 percent would be acceptable. HUNT and other Commissioners indicated that 75 percent was acceptable.

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**Commissioner Recommendation**

MOVED BY STOB, SECONDED BY FAUL that Amendment 1, amending IMC 18.07.480 Community Facilities Standards, and Amendment 2, amending Central Issaquah Development and Design Standards Chapter 4, Zoning Districts, Uses and Standards, be forwarded to the City Council with a recommendation for approval as proposed, with the following exceptions: (1) modify impervious surface maximum to 75 percent; and (2) retain existing code for tree retention; and that the Findings of Fact be signed by the PPC Chair and forwarded to the City Council. MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL COMMISSIONERS PRESENT.

**OTHER/ADJOURN**

Heinonen noted the next PPC meeting is July 27, which will be a discussion on architectural review and urban design. She said she will e-mail Commissioners with the tentative meeting schedule for August and the remainder of the year. With no additional business to conduct, PROBALA adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe  
Recording Secretary

*(Note: Alternate Members did not vote at tonight's meeting as there was a quorum of Regular Members present.)*