

Planning Policy Commission  
8-31-17

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES**

August 31, 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  
Troy Rahmig  
Carl Swedberg  
Lindsey Walsh

**STAFF PRESENT**

Jennifer R. Woods, Associate Planner  
Lucy Sloman, Land Development Manager  
Keith Niven, Economic Dev. and Dev. Services Director

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Richard Sowa, Chair, Development Commission  
Mel Morgan, Jr., Vice Chair, Development Commission  
Randy Harrison, Development Commission

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT—RE: URBAN SCHOOLS**

PROBALA said tonight's first agenda item is to discuss the Administration's proposal to specify 50 percent structured parking for urban public schools. FAUL said he would recommend that the Commission consider raising that number to 95 percent, and to provide covered bicycle parking unless there is already some provision for covered bicycle parking at the site. LEWIS asked for the Administration's rationale for specifying 50 percent.

Woods made staff's presentation on the proposed land use code amendment for urban schools. She said this is an add-on to the larger package of code amendments that PPC reviewed on July 13. She gave the schedule of meetings for review of this item, leading to Council deliberation as early as September 18. She displayed the proposed code amendment, as follows: 16. All new Public Schools shall provide 50 percent of the required parking in structure(s).

She concluded her presentation by giving some background on why the City is looking at its urban public school code and proposing this amendment. PROBALA asked does the 50 percent proposal make it comparable with the other parking amendments that PPC approved in July for businesses and other kinds of facilities. Woods replied yes. She offered copies of an e-mail from Connie Marsh, which was distributed electronically earlier to PPC members.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

PROBALA opened the meeting for public comment at 6:40 PM.

Steve Crawford, Director of Capital Projects for the Issaquah School District (ISD), spoke about the trade-offs in terms of the cost of providing structured parking vs. not having to buy additional land. He gave more information about how a structured parking requirement would add to the cost of an elementary school. He said a surface parking space costs about \$4,000, whereas structured parking costs about \$20,000 per space. Sunken-parking costs add another 10 percent to the cost of a project, he added. He said reduced land use area means the need for less land for a school

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site, and consolidating smaller parcels to form a site means needing to take fewer homes, businesses or properties. So smaller parcels for schools are advantageous for a number of reasons, he continued, and gave examples.

He continued his remarks about how impervious surfaces are required for recreational use, and how devoting another 10 percent of impervious surface for a parking facility would impact both the cost and footprint of the school. He said it's not prudent to buy property and assume that a variance will be forthcoming. The ISD needs to minimize the amount of land it purchases, he said, and a 50-percent requirement for structured parking does add to the cost of school construction. He discussed the rising costs for potential land for schools, and said a 95-percent requirement would represent a huge increase in costs.

PROBALA asked why structured parking would not open up more space on, say, an elementary school site. Crawford said about one-third of an acre is saved by putting in a two-story parking structure for an elementary school, but it would add significantly to the cost, probably around \$600,000.

Connie Marsh, Issaquah resident, referred to her e-mail that shows historically how the ISD has allocated space for parking. She said ISD has large parcels it would like to use to build school facilities, and spoke about the unintended consequence of creating a large sea of asphalt on large parcels if they are allowed to have large impervious surface areas on their sites without some code restrictions. She said the code as it is written doesn't address this difficulty, and said she doesn't think enough is known about the consequences of the proposed code. She said it seems that ISD is trying to not spend money and create tighter suburban schools, whereas her point of view is that the City is trying to create a more urban footprint for schools, but there is no guiding policy for urban schools. So trying to make a decision without a policy for urban schools in place is unlikely to result in a good outcome, she concluded.

Susan Hass, 19524 SE 24th Place, Sammamish, read a statement about her support for new standards, including some required structured parking, and her concern for not allowing ISD to build on any CF-F parcels. She said she would like to see the Commission recommend applying the new structured parking standards only to small parcels, and to be subject to the public process for retaining trees and open space. She also said the characteristics and definition of urban schools should be clarified upfront.

Steve Pereira, 170 NE Dogwood, Issaquah, said in his view more study needs to go into the scope and perspective of this proposed amendment. The entire issue of "what is an urban school" needs to be defined and considered, he continued, and encouraged the Commission to take the time to do that. He said the 50-percent structured parking requirement for businesses is based on how to get people to come to Issaquah, whereas it isn't necessary to incentivize people to use schools. He spoke in favor of shrinking the footprint for schools, and in favor of preserving the tree canopy and open spaces.

Mary Lynch, 2690 Oakcrest Drive, Issaquah, said she agrees with other commenters that we need a better definition of urban schools, including a better understanding of which areas of the City they can be located. She spoke about the option of having playfields built on top of underground parking and other ways to reduce the space required for schools, but said the policy needs to be in place first about what we want for the future of Issaquah and its schools.

Steve Crawford commented that it's possible to put a playfield on top of structured parking, but it will still be a 100-percent impervious surface, so that really solves nothing.

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Hearing no additional requests to speak, PROBALA closed the public hearing at 7:05 PM.

### **Commissioner Discussion**

PROBALA asked what are the ramifications of waiting to make a final decision on this. Woods gave some background on ISD's need to spend bond money on land for building schools that was approved by voters in 2016. Niven added ISD is in the process of moving forward to purchase property now, and so the purchase will be processed against the regulations in place now if this is not moved forward.

LEWIS said PPC talked about the need for an urban school policy at a previous meeting, and asked for an update. Woods said staff did include that recommendation in its transmittal of PPC's recommendations of other code amendments to Council, as discussed at PPC's July 13 meeting. She said her recollection is that PPC's recommendation was to look at urban school policy next year, which would be a Council decision.

WALSH said we have heard quite a few comments about not rushing this code amendment. If we do recommend approval of a 50-percent requirement to Council, can that number be revisited and changed. Woods replied yes, the Council could change it in the future.

FAUL presented several arguments why a 95-percent structured parking requirement would benefit the City, including (1) avoiding the need to invoke eminent domain, which would save in legal costs, and (2) possibly saving money in the long term by building in parking capacity now, in recognition of growth that is coming. He said e-bikes are very popular elsewhere and will become more so here in the future, and argued in favor of also recommending covered bicycle parking in the structured parking amendment.

WALSH noted the additional costs of providing 95-percent structured parking instead of 50 percent is a cost to ISD, but actually the cost comes back to homeowners and taxpayers. She added the City is not asking retail, commercial, and other development to provide 95 percent.

RAHMIG said he thinks additional discussion on urban school policy would be a good idea, but also recognizes the ISD's and City's need for more certainty before that can happen. He said he would favor making the requirement be 50 percent, which would be consistent with the percentage required of other existing land uses.

LEWIS asked why this requirement is specified for public schools only, and not private schools. Niven said that could be a follow-up recommendation to what is being proposed tonight.

LEWIS said she was disappointed in ISD's response tonight to the options of having structured parking below ballfields and other ways to avoid the spread of an asphalt jungle. She said she wishes she was hearing about more innovative ideas from ISD, and see our schools be a leader in this area. She said she could support increasing the proposed requirement to something like 80 percent.

WALSH asked about structured parking requirements in other comparable jurisdictions. Sloman referred to Federal Way's recent requirement that residential developments over 100 units provide 25 percent of parking in structured parking. That is the only existing example from our neighboring jurisdictions, she said, and gave more details about the City of Bellevue's approach.

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HUNT said she agrees that constructing a playfield over a parking lot consolidates impervious surface, which does free up other land on the site to be pervious. She said her recollection is that 50 percent was an aspirational number when PPC discussed this in July, and that requiring 50 percent is actually breaking new ground and is reasonable.

SWEDBERG said he can see that this is a difficult balancing act for ISD. As taxpayers, we want the most for our money, and if we delay this for another year, it will cost taxpayers. In addition, requiring 95-percent structured parking could triple or quadruple the cost that requiring 50 percent would cost. Since there appears to be both a time and money crunch factor here, he continued, he is in favor of allowing ISD to move forward and do its job, and recommend that the City start a process to develop an urban schools policy.

PROBALA agreed. She said she doesn't know how much power the City actually has in designing schools; the ISD knows what they need and has the expertise. She agreed that the City needs to have an urban school discussion and think out of the box, but that ISD needs to be able to move forward with the bond issue money that was already approved by voters.

MOVED BY RAHMIG, SECONDED BY SWEDBERG that PPC recommend that Council approve the amendments regarding public schools as presented in Attachment A, and that PPC's discussion of a public schools policy be included in staff's transmittal of the recommendation.

FAUL offered an amendment that the proposed motion specify 60 percent, not 50 percent, of the required parking be in structured parking, and that covered parking for bicycles be included unless sufficient parking is already included in the application. PROBALA asked the maker of the motion if that amendment was acceptable. RAHMIG replied no.

MAIN MOTION CARRIED BY MAJORITY VOTE of all PPC members present. (LEWIS, WALSH, FAUL voted in the minority).

### **PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED AMENDMENT—RE: ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW AND URBAN DESIGN**

Sloman made staff's presentation on the final draft of the Architectural Fit and Urban Design Manual. She gave a history of the work plan item, including the City's decision to hire Crandall/Arambula (C/A) as consultants to prepare a draft manual. She introduced three members of the Development Commission (SOWA, MORGAN, HARRISON) who are present tonight to speak to the Development Commission's work on this issue. She continued with a description of the meetings and work sessions held in the development of the manual. She explained how the Design Review Checklist (page 25 of 147) will be used by staff and the Development Commission to review applications. She continued with highlights and important points in the manual, including the somewhat unresolved question about whether to maintain a "bright line" between the two designated architectural districts, "Urban Core" and "Traditional Issaquah."

SOWA gave some thoughts about the Development Commission's need for a more effective tool to review projects, specifically regulations that are as specific and definitive as possible without eliminating all options and flexibility.

FAUL asked for clarification of the Development Commission's thinking about the "bright line." SOWA said the Commission acknowledged that at times it may not make sense to enforce it, but basically yes, the Commission does have a preference for making the line as bright as possible, recognizing that it will never be a completely black-and-white issue. HARRISON added the Development Commission will benefit from the manual and having better definitions, but so will

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potential applicants. It will help them understand what the City wants by providing a much clearer set of requirements for them, he added.

MORGAN said his concern about the bright line is that the only Urban Core design option now available to developers is Northwest Contemporary. So developers can choose only that one style within the Urban Core. He continued the Development Commission felt there might be some merit in allowing some of the other design options to seep into the Urban Core, but not the other way around. Niven added having the options clearly laid out for developers would mean that the Development Commission would have clear direction about “what style of architecture can go where.” He added both staff and the Commission realize that we may need to take this manual for “a test run” and make adjustments as we see how it plays out. Sloman gave more background on the consultant’s recommendation to limit the Urban Core to Northwest Contemporary, and said there was not a clear consensus from the Development Commission on this issue.

WALSH asked would this manual apply to commercial, retail, and multi-family developments, but not single-family. Sloman said it would apply to all of them, although it is unlikely that any single-family projects would be proposed, given the density and height allowances in central Issaquah. WALSH asked does it include the housing that now exists behind Gilman Village. Sloman replied yes.

LEWIS asked about whether the Staples property would be considered within the boundary of central Issaquah, which was an issue that PPC discussed at an earlier meeting. Niven clarified that the manual handles property the way boundaries now exist. He continued that the Staples property is currently considered to be within Olde Town, and Olde Town architectural issues are being handled through the Olde Town Subarea Plan Update and the Olde Town District Vision. If the Staples property were to stay in Olde Town, it would be subject to new architectural standards for that subarea, he added.

The Commission continued to discuss the issue of a bright line between architectural styles available for properties in the Urban Core and properties in Traditional Issaquah. HUNT asked what are the options for blurring the line. Sloman replied the two options the Development Commission discussed were having some area between the two be considered transitional, and allowing different styles to be used throughout the Urban Core. MORGAN said it was our thinking that it would be optimum that, if an applicant approached staff and requested a building in the Urban Core that was not Northwest Contemporary, staff would have the flexibility to bring that application forward to the Development Commission if they thought it had merit, but it’s difficult to figure out how to write that flexibility into the regulations. HARRISON said the Commission thought that establishing a hard line sends the message that we have established clear guidelines about the City’s expectations. However, he continued, the reality is that if staff receives an application for a style that isn’t on the list of acceptable styles and agrees with the applicant that it should be considered, that the Development Commission should at least be able to review and consider it.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

PROBALA opened the meeting for public comment at 8:00 PM.

Steve Pereira, 170 NE Dogwood, Issaquah, commented that he would like to see a revision to Issaquah Style that would result in a downzoning of building heights, and to see that apply to the old Route 10 route district as well as less density. He said he applauds the Development Commission’s right to say “no” to applications, and favors giving the Development Commission the flexibility to decline applications. This manual is a step in that direction, he said.

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Connie Marsh, Issaquah resident, said she agrees the manual represents a step in the right direction; however, being consistent, flexible, and having the power to change all at the same time just isn't possible. She said her concern is that buildings like the Issaquah Library don't really fit into any of the styles in the manual, and she doesn't understand whether the Library building would be allowed. She spoke in favor of a Northwest Industrial Style, and said the issue of view protection was not really addressed in the discussions during the development of this manual or in the manual itself.

Susan Hass, 19524 SE 24th Place, Sammamish, spoke of the difficult task in trying to address a wide variety of issues, like innovations, covered bicycle parking, sustainability, and so on, and the City's and Development Commission's need for a manual. At the same time, she continued, she likes weird things that don't fit perfectly, and doesn't want to see carefully constructed, social-engineered projects that lack creativity. She said she realizes that government has to provide fairness and certainty, but she would also want people to be able to exercise creativity and improvise on their own.

David Kappler, 255 SE Andrews St., Issaquah, said he hopes the manual will provide the Development Commission with more veto power, and gave examples of recent projects that he wishes would have been vetoed. He said he understands the challenge the manual is trying to address, and said keep up the good work.

Hearing no additional requests to speak, PROBALA closed public comment at 8:10 PM.

### **Commissioner Discussion**

Sloman explained that the City is obligated to provide substantive due process, which means its regulations must be clear and predictable. The City doesn't have the discretion to just say "no" to applications based on anything but what is in the code, she continued, and doing so can lead to court cases. She said she understands the wishes of the Development Commission and PPC to craft code language that gives flexibility, but the City can't be capricious in reviewing applications. FAUL asked where this issue is discussed in the packet materials. Sloman said it isn't; it is a policy piece that can be discussed tonight if PPC so chooses. LEWIS asked whether legal counsel has reviewed the draft, and said she was hoping that legal counsel would be present tonight for PPC's discussion. Sloman said legal counsel has reviewed the draft and flagged two issues that needed more attention: what is an inappropriate color, and clarification of what is meant by compatibility. The extra 21 pages staff included at the end of the draft manual address those two issues, she noted.

Niven briefly described a state Supreme Court ruling in which the City was sued for "vagueness" in a court case involving a developer. He gave a short explanation of how this draft manual tries to address that kind of liability.

SWEDBERG asked how the City's Administrative Adjustment of Standards (AAS) would work with this manual. Sloman said as it stands now, an AAS is not available for these regulations. The consultant heard concerns from the Development Commission and public that AASs were being used too frequently, and were not included in this manual.

PROBALA asked can developments in the one style allowed in the Urban Core be in different materials and so on, so that they look different from one another. Sloman replied yes. SOWA added it was the intention to establish a kind of template to provide some certainty, then look to the architectural community to use creativity in ways that can meet the City's regulations. PROBALA agreed that developers need that kind of certainty. SOWA said clarity will make the approval

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process easier for the City and Development Commission as well. HARRISON said he thinks a better defined process will be better for the public as well. He said this is a living document, and we can come back and review it and make adjustments as necessary.

PROBALA said she likes to see inclusion of gardens and trees on flat roofs, and noticed the manual does not include any requirements for that.

WALSH noted that on page 102 of 147, the manual states that “any customer entries [to ground floor retail] accessed directly from parking lots or alleys” is listed under “inappropriate.” She said particularly when it is raining, it can be very convenient for customers to enter a retail establishment directly from the parking lot. Sloman said staff raised that same concern with C/A. WALSH asked staff to follow up with C/A.

FAUL asked about community spaces and green spaces. Sloman replied many aspects of development not covered in the manual are addressed elsewhere in the City’s Design and Development Standards.

WALSH asked for clarification of the chart on page 119 of 147, which shows the minimum and maximum stories allowed under each of the styles. She noted that in some cases, the heights seem pretty tall. Sloman said the task was to look at architecture and urban design, and not at permitted heights; the heights shown in the chart are what are in the zoning standards now. WALSH asked so the Northwest Revival style, which stipulates six to ten stories, would only be appropriate in areas that allowed buildings of that height. Sloman replied the Administration is recommending that Northwest Revival style have a minimum of four to five stories and a maximum of seven to eight stories. She said originally, the Northwest Lodge style was the only style to allow six-plus stories, and the Development Commission asked for an additional style for buildings of that height. The result is the Northwest Revival style, which C/A added upon request. The Development Commission did not have a chance to discuss it, she added.

FAUL referred to a simulated wood material used in the Highlands that is warping and looks terrible. He suggested that the manual state that using that kind of material is not acceptable. Niven said the manual originally specified only natural wood materials could be used, but the Development Commission wanted developers to have flexibility to use something synthetic, such as Hardiplank. MORGAN added the Development Commission’s scope is to review architectural design for compliance with design standards, and the manual was developed to help all parties be able to do that. Sloman agreed, and said Building Department staff and others are behind the scenes looking at applications with a finer focus than the Development Commission. HARRISON added in some past applications, the Development Commission asked for materials to be used that are more representative of the Northwest, like stone and wood, but we didn’t get it because there wasn’t a list of “appropriate” and “inappropriate” materials, as there is in this manual.

LEWIS asked when will the holes in this draft be firmed up into a final document. Sloman said the majority, if not all, of what is left to be done is cleaning up the format, numbering, and relatively minor changes. LEWIS said there are a few locations of “inappropriate” that still need to be filled in, such as pages 98-99 of 147. She said the description of an “inappropriate” cornice on page 60 of 147 also seems to be lacking. Sloman replied staff will follow up with C/A on any areas that are still missing. On page 60 of 147, she continued, the “inappropriate” photo is intended to complement the standards that already exist in the City’s code, and the photo provides a proportional representation rather than a number, which might not be the right approach. She explained that legally, photos are considered as valuable as words in providing direction to a developer. FAUL said using the inappropriate cornice photo on page 60 as an example, how would the City

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determine whether an application that included a cornice was acceptable or not. Niven explained the process, beginning with an applicant filling out the required paperwork, staff's review, and the Development Commission's review, including the appeals process available to applicants. He said we all want clarity, and there is probably not enough in some places in the manual, so we assume we will be adding clarity where we find it is needed as we work with the manual.

HUNT suggested that some of the photos of buildings from outside the City be replaced by photos of buildings in the City. Sloman said we talked about that with C/A and the Development Commission, and explained the non-residential building survey that the Development Commission did to identify suitable photos from the City. HARRISON said there is also an aspirational aspect to this effort, and especially in the Urban Core, we don't yet have a lot of examples of what we are targeting. Sloman agreed, and said a lot of examples are from Portland, which is where C/A is located. It's hard to find photos of five-story buildings in Issaquah that are what is envisioned in the manual.

LEWIS suggested that the "context" description on page 141 of 147 is an important part of the document, but seems like more of an after-thought because of where it is located in the manual. WALSH agreed. After some additional discussion, Sloman said she is hearing that the Commission would like to see the context language pulled into page 22 of 147. LEWIS confirmed that is correct, and said it may be repetitive to include it again but it is important enough to warrant doing that. WALSH agreed. Staff made a note of it.

LEWIS and WALSH both expressed concern that more space should be devoted to the single style option in the Urban Core, given that it is such a large part of the City. PROBALA agreed that more images would be helpful.

FAUL asked whether the use of aluminum for doors is addressed. Sloman replied yes. FAUL questioned whether the manual is too restrictive on the choice of colors. Sloman replied the message we heard from Council, the Development Commission, and the community is that colors such as "Atlas blue" are not appropriate for the City. The color palettes in the manual are not necessarily monotonous, she continued, but they do represent a narrower range of choices. WALSH said she thinks the explanation on pages 123-124 of 147 about color, hue, tint, tone, and so on is very good, and would like to see a similar color wheel for earth tones as the one on page 124. She suggested that references to colors in each design area in the manual refer to these pages. Sloman gave reasons why doing that is not considered good code writing, but said she will ask C/A about including an earth-tone color wheel.

MORGAN said the Development Commission has not had a chance to discuss the consultant's proposed Northwest Revival Style, and expressed his concern whether Northwest Revival and Northwest Lodge provide enough options for "five over two" mixed-use construction (five stories of wood construction above two stories). He said he wishes that the consultant would have come up with another style, or that Arts and Crafts Style be allowed up to seven stories. He said he will look to staff to address the five-over-two issue with the consultant. LEWIS suggested perhaps the Urban Grange style would work. Sloman said the overall "barn" profile of the Urban Grange style wouldn't really help address the five-over-two issue. MORGAN said perhaps C/A could come up with photos of five-over-two construction in the Northwest Lodge Style. Staff made a note of it.

FAUL asked whether the use of reflective or tinted windows is addressed. Sloman replied yes. FAUL asked whether street lighting, the use of satellite dishes and cell towers, HVAC, and other utilities are addressed. Sloman said utilities are addressed in the City's existing code. Staff did ask

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C/A whether they thought any additional standards for utilities were necessary for this manual, and they did not indicate they thought any were necessary.

Sloman asked Commissioners for their thoughts on the policy consideration on natural areas and natural context areas, as outlined on page 12 of 147. She said this is a policy question on which there was no real consensus or clarity in discussions with either the Development Commission or the Council. She showed a map of the natural areas, parks, and open spaces identified as natural context areas. She said staff doesn't have a problem with what is now in the draft manual, but wanted PPC to have an opportunity to weigh in.

She continued the administration's recommendation is:

- Hillside and developable property are not included.
- Natural stormwater ponds with trails are included, engineered ones are not.
- Regulated wetlands, creeks and their buffers are included.
- City parks, city-owned open space, and private protected property are included.
- Map is informational, not regulatory.

After some discussion, RAHMIG said he is comfortable with treating all natural areas as equal, but likes the clarifications that the Administration has put forward. LEWIS agreed, and noted that variations in annual rainfall can mean the difference between a ditch and a creek. WALSH said she questions how to deal with engineered ponds; not all engineered ponds are an eyesore, but we wouldn't want to force a developer to include a view over an ugly engineered pond. Sloman gave examples and explained C/A's thinking in requiring orientation of development in natural content areas.

FAUL asked for clarification on the process at this point. PROBALA said the Commission can move ahead with consideration of the manual with the understanding that language on page 85 of 147 ("Natural Context") will be improved, language and photos in some places will be finalized, the map will be updated, and other formatting changes will be made.

MOVED BY FAUL, SECONDED BY RAHMIG that PPC recommend approval by Council of the Architectural Review and Urban Design Manual as a development tool to be used by the Development Commission and staff to evaluate development and redevelopment within the Central Issaquah Plan area. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PROBALA complimented staff on their expertise and hard work. Other Commissioners agreed, and said the manual will be very helpful and valuable for the City.

#### **OTHER/ADJOURN**

With no additional business to conduct, PROBALA adjourned the meeting at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe  
Recording Secretary

*(Note: Alternate Members do not vote if there is a quorum of Regular Members present, except in the case of a tie vote.)*