

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

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

January 10, 2018

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.
Troy Rahmig
Althea Saldanha, Alt.
Carl Swedberg

STAFF PRESENT

Trish Heinonen, Policy Planning Manager
Christen Leeson, Senior Planner
Keith Niven, Economic Dev. and Dev. Services Director

OTHERS PRESENT

David Kappler
Mary Lynch
Kari Rowley Magill
Connie Marsh
Mel Morgan, Jr.
Steve Pereira

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 November 30, 2017, be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CENTRAL ISSAQUAH PLAN DISTRICT VISIONS

Presentation

Niven made some introductory remarks about the process to date to revisit the district visions, and what specifically Council is asking for from PPC. He continued staff is proposing that PPC's work be divided into three meetings; tonight's meeting, with a focus on the introduction; and a second and third meeting, with a focus on two of the districts at each meeting. He discussed the efforts so far on the district visions, including public outreach and contributions from Land and Shore and from PPC.

He asked PPC for their preference as to how to proceed from here, with the hope that the work will be done by the end of the first quarter of 2018. After some discussion by the Commission, it was generally agreed that the structure of the existing document is a good starting place. HUNT suggested adding illustrations and photos, as was done in previous iterations. SALDANHA agreed the structure is good, but has suggestions to make the language stronger and more actionable, as well as suggestions for the definition of success. PROBALA agreed with the three-meeting approach described by Niven. She asked that changes offered at tonight's meeting get incorporated into the next iteration of the document before the next meeting on district visions so Commissioners can react to the latest version. Staff agreed. HUNT said she would like to also have the proposed code amendment regarding implementation available for review as well.

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

PROBALA asked what is the timeline for putting the vision into code once it is approved by Council. Niven replied that step represents a “big fork in the road.” He described two options. One is to leave the vision as policy direction, with a section in the code to make the connection to the vision. The other is to change the applicability section in the code to state that the vision must be adhered to. If the vision is clear enough, he continued, it can function like regulations. He described how each approach would work. PROBALA asked would the actual code come to PPC for review. Niven replied yes. PROBALA said she would prefer to see the actual code that a builder would see when they are seeking, say, a permit. Niven explained the advantages and disadvantages of that approach, and said we can discuss this again at some point.

Steve Pereira raised questions about the structure of how housing options within districts are described in the document; references to the environment, specifically to the tree canopy; and how to measure economic vitality, specifically jobs. Connie Marsh asked whether the language from the Central Issaquah Plan at the beginning of the document will be part of the structure. Niven replied yes.

FAUL asked Niven for his opinion on the structure. Niven referred to the City’s goal of getting more clarity in the visions for central Issaquah in an attempt to get more predictability for projects to be built in Issaquah. This document will do that and is on the right track, he continued, recognizing that no document will address every situation that the City will face.

Niven continued his presentation with a summary of comments from Land & Shore, beginning on page 3 of 16. The Commission generally agreed with Land & Shore that the *Central Issaquah Vision* piece needs work. PROBALA asked the Commissioners to come up with ideas for improvements to the vision statement and send them to staff for discussion at the next meeting.

Niven continued with Land & Shore feedback on the guiding principles, including adding a reference to jobs and consistency of housing within neighborhoods, as noted earlier by Pereira. Pereira said his concern is to promote home ownership rather than apartments. PROBALA said all communities would probably like to see more condominium development rather than apartments, and referred to the liability issue that is keeping condos from being developed. She suggested that the wording on Housing include the concept of “owner occupied.” SALDANHA asked what are we trying to accomplish by preferring development of condos rather than apartments. Pereira replied his view is that a City gets a different economic vitality in terms of the live-work-play idea from people who own their residences vs. from people who rent their residences.

The Commission generally agreed to include language about having a diversity of housing that speaks to both home ownership and rental properties.

FAUL asked could a new development in the form of a high-rise residential building be built in the City now as a condominium. Niven replied right now, a high-rise residential building would be an apartment or a hotel, and gave the liability and risk conditions that are keeping condominiums from being built by developers. Kari Rowley Magill gave some additional perspective on building condominiums in today’s market.

Mary Lynch suggested adding language about keeping housing for our existing citizens rather than approving development that displaces them, as is happening in Seattle. RAHMIG said he agrees, but the wording needs to be at the appropriate level of detail for a vision statement, such as “facilitating investment in the community.”

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

Marsh said she disagrees; adding housing in central Issaquah was intended to provide vitality and a 24-hour environment, and said she would like to see language added that addresses why and what kind of housing is desired in each district from a vision standpoint.

Magill noted there is no mention of the Cascade Agenda in the document, and explained the vision in the Cascade Agenda. Staff noted that there is a specific reference to it in the Overview section of the Central Plan. PROBALA asked wasn't there a statement in an earlier iteration of this document about why the City is addressing growth, housing, and so on in central Issaquah. She continued residents need to understand what value the new development they are seeing is bringing to the community. Heinonen said we can add looking at the Overview to the list of "homework" items for discussion at the next meeting. FAUL and HUNT agreed.

Niven continued it appears that the Economic Vitality piece needs to be tweaked to speak to jobs. Pereira said the tree canopy issue also should be addressed, as well as building on steep slopes like the Bergsma property and in wildlife corridors. Niven continued his presentation on the language that addresses the environment in the document, and options for redrafting the wording that now exists. Staff will review it and bring back a red-lined version for additional discussion, he added, and answered some of Pereira's concerns about the tree canopy.

RAHMIG asked did the Land & Shore recommendation include adding a statement about schools. Niven replied Confluence is the only proposed neighborhood in central Issaquah in which the issue of schools comes up. He gave some background on recent discussions about schools in central Issaquah. Another facet of this issue is the objective of a "live-work-play" outcome for these neighborhoods, and whether that should also include schools ("...live-work-play and learn"). FAUL said a plan for urban schools is key for these districts, including public schools, private schools, preschools, daycare, and after-school facilities, particularly as most of the anticipated development seems to be apartments which would provide less space for children to be outside than single-family homes. Marsh asked clarifying questions about what level of detail is being requested now. It seems like transportation should be a stand-alone issue, and "other essential services" could include schools, she stated.

Marsh added the idea of "protection" should be strengthened in the paragraph on the environment. Lynch agreed, and said the wetlands have been destroyed because of all the parking on the valley floor, so the valley floor and the lake also have to be protected as we grow. HUNT asked for clarification of whether wildlife corridors also refers to riparian corridors in the central area. Lynch said we need to provide safe ways for wildlife to traverse in addition to the riparian corridors, and gave examples. PROBALA suggested separating the paragraph on the environment into two sections, natural features and an expanded section on wildlife, with better language for both.

MORGAN asked whether listing schools as a public space in the paragraph on "Sense of Community" is appropriate, and suggested "adding public schools" after "promoting environmental sustainability" in that paragraph. HUNT questioned whether schools should be in "Essential Services" rather than "Sense of Community." MORGAN said schools are critical to a sense of community and he would favor leaving it in that category. HUNT said her intent was that schools receive appropriate emphasis. FAUL said it would be interesting to have the Parks Department give some feedback as well.

Marsh spoke in favor of making transportation a separate category on its own, rather than placed in with other services in "Essential Services." Others agreed. HUNT also said the vision

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

could then be expanded to include ways of getting around other than transit, such as bicycles. FAUL asked in that case, what would be “other essential services.” Heinonen listed utilities that would be included as essential services, as well as sewer, water, fire protection, police, and so on. Marsh said in her view, “essential [services] for daily living” means places to get food, medicine, and so on, and said perhaps a conversation is required about what exactly is envisioned by essential services for daily living in central Issaquah. Lynch agreed, and used being able to get groceries locally as an example. Pereira said he disagrees, and doesn’t think “daily living” refers to having a grocery store in every district, but rather refers to the larger scale of where we are going as a City. HUNT gave her perspective on having day-to-day needs met in general for the whole plan.

Marsh addressed the language in the “Innovation” paragraph, and said to her innovation means staying on the cutting edge of the right way to develop as a City, and this does not address that. It is also redundant, she said, and could be removed unless the success scenario can be clarified. Heinonen gave examples of innovative programs the City is doing in central Issaquah. Magill gave examples of innovation, including use of cross-laminated timber and micro-housing units. Niven clarified that it seems the Commission thinks a paragraph on “Innovation” should be retained, just reworked and expanded. The discussion participants generally agreed with that approach.

David Kappler spoke in favor of using cross-laminated timber, as mentioned earlier by Magill, and said innovation should be reflected in all these categories. He noted that urban schools will be needed and there is a lot of frustration in the community with ensuring adequate school capacity.

Niven continued leading the discussion on the section beginning “Need for Change.” He noted that Land & Shore was not convinced that including this section beyond just a sentence or two was needed. PROBALA said she does not think it is necessary; this is a vision. HUNT agreed. PROBALA said she does think a statement about why we are doing this is needed. Niven referred to the paragraph “Reset.” FAUL said some people may want this information. RAHMIG said it flows now, and tells a story from “Need for Change” to “Reset,” so if the “Need for Change” is being eliminated then perhaps the “Reset” heading also gets eliminated. Marsh disagreed, and argued in favor of including a description of “this is the problem and this is how we are making it better.” Future decision-makers and interested parties will need this information, she added. FAUL agreed. Pereira said the information should be expanded beyond just the six moratorium items listed. HUNT said she favors a very abbreviated explanation of “why” and this lengthy of an explanation is not warranted. RAHMIG agreed, and said a mention of the process is good but perhaps not this much. SWEDBERG said maybe we need to restructure the order to: here’s the problem we had, we reset it, we have these district visions, and then the visions follow. PROBALA said she agrees it is disjointed as it now is, and that the explanation of why we are doing this needs to be first. Marsh gave suggestions for how to package the explanations in boxes and other ways that would increase its chances of being read. HUNT and PROBALA also gave ideas for condensing and restructuring how the information is presented.

Niven continued with “District Visions: The Community Conversation.” Marsh gave suggestions for how to package that paragraph.

Niven continued with the buckets “Livable/Distinctive/Connected/Sustainable”, and explained this is an organizational strategy that staff developed and which would be applied to each district. He gave a recap of Land & Shore’s concerns with the approach. SALDANHA said she

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

likes the list generally, and would be in favor of strengthening the language in some places and tying it back more closely with the vision. Marsh said words like “livable” and “sustainable” are not defined for this context. She said another idea would be to use the headings of topics that we just discussed (Environment, Sense of Community, and so on) into this chart so the two sections would be linked. HUNT said her concern is that the same issue, such as Transportation, appears in more than one bucket. She said there is so much overlap in these buckets that perhaps a better approach would be to not use these bucket categories, and instead see how they would fit with the guiding principles instead. RAHMIG said he’s not quite ready to say the four buckets should be eliminated, but there does seem to be a disconnect with the guiding principles, and gave examples of ways to strengthen the linkages. Niven gave his initial reaction to the suggestions. He said staff will think these ideas through more thoroughly and be prepared with revisions that can be discussed at the next meeting.

MORGAN spoke in favor of the organizational structure of the four buckets, particularly from the perspective of a member of the public reading this for the first time. He said the bullet points may be redundant and there may be some overlap, but it also reflects what he, as a resident, would want to know. PROBALA agreed, and said the organization works for her as well. She said it would be good to write a description of each of the bullet headings, then capture them and put them in the front section. HUNT said the statements about Economic Vitality, for example, would be hard to place in the “right” bucket. Kappler agreed that statements would likely appear in more than one bucket. PROBALA asked would you keep the four buckets as they have been presented. Kappler said yes.

PROBALA said it sounds like we are back to discussing the structure, and asked for any objections to the structure as presented. There were no comments. Niven continued with some proposed steps for staff to rework the language, based on suggestions made tonight. He asked participants whether they would be willing to also do some “homework” and submit specific wordsmithing suggestions to staff before the next meeting. The Commissioners agreed.

SALDANHA gave some specific examples of language that could be strengthened, such as clarifying what is meant by “work with...,” and encouraged staff to rework the language wherever possible to be more actionable and measurable.

Niven continued with his presentation of the Green Necklace graphic on page 6 of 16. He shared information from the Parks Department’s work on identifying the Green Necklace connections, and about the three images being used to help people visualize the Green Necklace.

FAUL gave his perspective from someone who is biking or walking and who doesn’t want to compete with cars for access. PROBALA said she would like a separate page that shows what segments the City already has, and the possibilities for what we hope we might have eventually. It doesn’t have to be an unbroken circle, she added. HUNT said she would support aligning this vision with the vision the Parks Department has for parks. She said she still thinks the circle graphic of the necklace is too cartoonish, and spoke in favor of a new diagram that combines what trails and so on exist and where we hope to go with it eventually. She added having a visual to share with the public is very important.

MORGAN suggested the “Green Network” instead of the “Green Necklace,” and said what we really want to get across to people is to show all the places someone can go to walk or bike in central Issaquah. He suggested a full page of public spaces, parks, pathways, bike routes, and

Planning Policy Commission
1-10-18

so on that exist now, and then another page of what the Parks Department sees as aspirational now and is planned for ten or 20 years from now. FAUL and PROBALA agreed.

Pereira said he agrees it wasn't designed to be a circle so much as a network, but the reference to "necklace" is also a reference to the natural beauty ("jewels") that Issaquah is known for. The necklace concept was the mechanism by which the City would retain that natural beauty, he continued, and some of that is lost when we just talk about a network.

Marsh referred to the Central Issaquah's Plan for "verdant landscaping along our streetscapes." She continued with her perspective on the CIP's vision to create a green network of walking space, parks and trails made up on individual components, which altogether make a Green Network. She gave suggestions for how to capture that in a graphic.

Kappler said the Parks Department map emphasizes connections outward to regional trails and so on over intra-City connections. He spoke in favor of using "network" instead of "necklace" and gave his perspective on progress in making the connections.

Niven reiterated the work that staff will do between now and the next meeting, including some of the restructuring and wording changes suggested tonight. He said we will also take a look at incorporating some of the concerns expressed tonight in the first two district descriptions in the event that the participants have time to delve into those next time.

Heinonen said tomorrow she will be sending out three pieces of "homework" for participants: (1) a redlined version of the Central Issaquah Plan vision statement for any additional feedback from participants; (2) the Overview section of the Central Issaquah Plan for any proposed additions or changes; and (3) a proposed approach to restructure and/or reorganize the information (the "boxes") that precedes the neighborhood vision pieces.

OTHER/ADJOURNMENT

Heinonen noted the next meeting is a special meeting on Wednesday, January 24, on wireless communications, and that the discussion on District Visions will continue at PPC's meeting on Thursday, January 25. With no additional business to conduct, PROBALA adjourned the meeting at 9:02 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.)