CITY OF ISSAQUAH
PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 14, 2018

City Hall South
Council Chambers

135 Sunset Way
Issaquah, WA 98027

PPC MEMBERS PRESENT	STAFF PRESENT
Joan Probala, Chair	Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Manager
Ron Faul, Vice Chair	Christen Leeson, Senior Planner
Joy Lewis	Jennifer Fink, Park Planner
Troy Rahmig	Keith Niven, Dev. Svcs. & Econ. Dev. Director
Bill Rinehart	
Lindsey Walsh	

PROBALA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM. She gave some highlights from her conversation with the Mayor earlier today. She also gave her perspective on the site tour held as part of the May 24 PPC meeting, and said it was a great opportunity for members to drive through the City and take a close look at where the City is now and where it is going.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
MOVED BY FAUL, SECONDED BY LEWIS that minutes of the PPC meeting on May 24, 2018 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

INTRODUCTION—GILMAN BOULEVARD VISIONING (I)
Leeson made staff's presentation on the status of the Gilman Boulevard Visioning project, using slides. She described why a vision is needed; the project goals; the interactive, online survey now underway to receive feedback from the public, which will run through July 13; the community open house scheduled for July 11; and next steps to develop a draft vision for Council approval. In response to a question by FAUL, she described the boundaries contained within the Gilman Boulevard Visioning project.

PUBLIC HEARING: 2018 PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN (D)
Fink made staff's presentation on the 2018 Parks Strategic Plan. She said tonight's focus is to introduce the plan to PPC and describe the goals and policies within the plan. She gave highlights of the plan update process, beginning in early 2017; the phases of public engagement; the joint work the Park Board did with PPC on the Green Necklace; and the Park Board's recommendation at its May 17 meeting to forward the plan to Council for approval.

She continued with more details about the public engagement process, which was divided into phases. From the public engagement process, she continued, five themes emerged: placemaking, connectivity, innovative action, a vital environment, and active lifestyle. She showed a diagram of the strategic projects and anchor corridors that will implement the vision.

FAUL identified projects on Tiger Mountain, and asked for clarification of the specific trailheads marked #28 and #29 on the map on page 89 of 171. Fink replied those are the East Sunset Trailhead and the South Second Ave. Trailhead for the Rainier Trail. LEWIS asked how projects #28 and #29 will impact the homeless camps that exist there, and how the City will address any impacts. Fink made a note of it and said the City does have a protocol that it follows, and she will

follow up. FAUL asked will new trails be built at the site identified as #29. Fink replied enhanced and expanded uses are a possibility there, and noted that is one of the most heavily used trailheads in the state.

She continued with a description of the Creek Corridor project, an anchor project connecting neighborhoods, the Mountains to Sound Greenway, the Green Necklace, and so on. She gave more details about the Green Necklace, and said this project links the Parks Strategic Plan and the visioning work on the Green Necklace done earlier this year. She continued with a slide displaying strategic projects in the near-term, mid-term, and long-term. RINEHART asked what is considered short term. Fink referred to page 92 and described how projects were categorized as short-, mid-, and long-term. She explained that this plan is intended to be a working tool that is dynamic and will be reviewed and updated. LEWIS asked how frequently will updates take place. Fink said after the initial six-year period, the plan will be updated with new data. In addition, staff will provide Council with a yearly assessment of how well the plan is working for us.

Fink continued with implementation of the Parks Strategic Plan. PROBALA asked why there appears to be a delay in identifying funding until 2021. Fink replied the plan addresses projects in years one through six of what is intended to be a 20-year document. PROBALA said it is hard to plan and decide which projects get attention if no funding mechanism has been identified for them. Fink said funding decisions are Council decisions. Various options are available to fund projects, such as grants, levies, bonds, and so on, and this plan did not focus on financing. Next year, she continued, we will be taking a much harder look at specific funding of all of these projects. WALSH agreed it would be useful to know which of these projects have funding already associated with them, and the percentage of each project that is already funded. Fink said the plan specifically did not get into the details of funding; that work will lie ahead as the plan grows and matures. LEWIS and WALSH said that information would help the public understand where we are and where we need to go.

Fink continued her presentation on the Parks Strategic Plan's goals and policies. She explained how the language in the 2015 Parks Plan and the 2014 Parks Element of the Comprehensive Plan was modified using feedback from the public. She gave highlights made in the update as a result of the public process.

LEWIS asked for clarification of Policy C1.1, "No change of use within park shall occur without Parks coordination/assessment of impacts and any mitigation measures," specifically why this sentence was added. Fink replied it was added to be sure the Parks Department is at the table for any discussion of parks-related issues, particularly as the City grows and changes.

Fink explained why new Policy E1-2.1, "Impact fees shall be used to address the impacts of development on the park system and improvements that serve the community at large," was added. She continued there has been confusion about how impact fees are used, and this policy is intended to clarify that fees are intended to ensure that "growth pays for growth." PROBALA asked for details about the percentage paid by developers for impact fees. Fink said she can get that information to PPC. LEWIS asked how often are impact fees reviewed. Fink replied the last rate study was done in 2015. The rate schedule is normally updated annually, but the City has been waiting for the Parks Strategic Plan to be completed.

She continued her presentation with an explanation of Policies F-3 and F-4 on moving to a performance-based, level of service basis for parks. WALSH said she thinks using a level of service basis would be good; the measurements could be part of the metrics that are reported annually. What are the obstacles to moving in that direction, she asked, in addition to allocating the appropriate time and effort. LEWIS asked what is the time frame for implementing that approach.

Fink replied there are some initial steps that need to be taken to get to that body of work, but staff is working in that direction. No timeframe has been determined yet, she added.

PROBALA asked would the annual review of the plan be presented to Council only, or would it also be presented to PPC. Fink replied that Council requested staff make an annual report to Council at its last meeting, but staff could make the presentation to PPC as well.

Public Comment
PROBALA opened the meeting for public comment at 7:13 PM.

Tom Anderson, 837 S. Front Street South, Issaquah, said he lives close to the trailhead near Issaquah High School. He referred to Policy C-2.4, "The use of signage shall be limited in order to preserve the visual integrity and natural character…" and said perhaps that is why there is no sign at that trailhead. He described the large numbers of people who use it and their difficulties because signage is not available. He encouraged the City to solve the problem by installing a sign for users of the trail.

Steve Pereira, 170 NE Dogwood, Issaquah, thanked PPC members for their service. He said he has no specific items to speak to on the Parks Strategic Plan, but he would like to make a few suggestions for improvements. He said he would like the plan to contain more concrete mechanisms for how the actions described in the plan are going to happen; otherwise, the plan is just aspirational. He also said he thinks the scope should be greater than the Green Necklace, and include the overall tree canopy for the City.

Janet Wall, 22740 SE 56th St., Issaquah, said her primary focus is habitat restoration, and continued she doesn't think the Strategic Plan speaks enough to the importance of wildlife corridors or our iconic salmon. She said we need to recognize the needs of our wildlife, fish, and birds in an increasingly urban area, especially preserving our wildlife corridors. In general, she continued, she agrees with the major points in the proposed plan but thinks it lacks details. She spoke of her volunteer efforts to control tansy ragwort in properties around the City and said the City needs a better volunteer program for projects such as tansy ragwort removal. She described her impressions from walking the west side of Issaquah Creek recently, and said she was dismayed to see the lack of maintenance there. She said signage is also not clear for people walking on the west side of the creek, and should be clarified. She made additional comments about the City's need for a better volunteer program and ways to utilize more public involvement.

PROBALA thanked Wall for her tireless work on behalf of the City and said insurance is one of the reasons volunteer programs can be difficult for the City to implement.

Connie Marsh, Squak Mountain resident, said she agrees with Wall that volunteer groups have not received much support from the Parks Department, and said she is aware of volunteer groups elsewhere that do have insurance. She continued her comments on the signage for Park Pointe trails, specifically that the grant funds were made available 15 years ago and the signs were just erected this spring. She referred to a matrix she developed of her specific concerns and issues, distributed via e-mail to Commissioners on June 13. She said her purpose in creating the matrix was to look at the goals and policies and "unscramble" them into a different organizational structure. She said from that exercise, she found that there is a lot in the plan about parks, but not much about the vision or topics such as trails, recreation, open space, and so on. Those are the core areas of our parks system, she continued, and each should have its own section. She concluded her recommendation is that PPC approve this plan as a temporary plan only, given that it can't be completely rewritten at this point, with the understanding that more work is needed. It is not close to what we want in the Comprehensive Plan, she added.

Hearing no additional requests to speak, PROBALA closed the public hearing at 7:32 PM.

Commissioner Discussion
LEWIS said she agrees with much of what Marsh said. She said she was disappointed that the plan does not include a timetable or any details about when any of the activities it contains will happen. She said this document is a good starting point, but she thinks it needs to evolve from where it is today, and thinks the suggestion to move it along with the understanding that it needs additional work is a good idea. PROBALA asked LEWIS to write down the specific things she feels are missing and would like to see included in the plan.

FAUL said he agrees with LEWIS. RAHMIG said he also agrees, although there is a lot in the plan that he does like. He said it obviously represents a lot of work, and he likes the visual layout, maps, and so on. He continued the plan does seem to "contain a lot of words," and said because a lot of the text was taken from the previous structure and language, he wonders whether the new language might not be too beholden to the previous version. Perhaps the opportunity to really do a complete refresh was not taken here, he said. He agreed that the organization of the plan could be improved, and said it should be easier for someone to find what they are looking for on a specific topic, such as wildlife corridors, trailheads, wayfinding, and so on. He said he supports the idea of a reorganization, either now or at some point in the future. RINEHART agreed. He said overall, the document is great, and said he would like to see a list of projects for the short-term, mid-term, and long-term, plus more detail about what we have now that we know we want to reinvest in. He suggested linking each specific project to a goal so that the connection is clear. Fink replied staff has already attempted to do that, and referred to the matrix on page 109 of 171.

WALSH suggested some reorganization would make the document easier to use for a first-time user, and said Marsh's matrix does that. She said her matrix represents a lot of work on her part, and doesn't take out any of the work in the plan; it just recognizes it in a different way. She continued her concern is that, given that funding concerns belong to the Council, then including a funding piece in this plan may not be the right approach. Perhaps the funding piece should be separate, as is done with the CIP, she said. LEWIS said she still thinks that the timeline for when funding of projects will be addressed is fundamental. Sometimes it seems like projects kind of evaporate, she continued, and when she sees "we are planning on doing this" used continually in a document, she wants more detail about when those activities will be addressed.

PROBALA asked for clarification of PPC's role in reviewing the Parks Strategic Plan. Heinonen clarified that PPC's role is to review the goals and policies in the proposed plan, as they go into the Comprehensive Plan and Parks Element. PROBALA asked what is the next step in this process. Fink said the plan is for Council adoption in July. She noted the plan has been vetted by the Park Board in the version you see tonight. She also said staff understands the ease of reference issues that have been brought forward tonight.

WALSH asked what is the deadline for approving the plan. Heinonen explained the plan needs to move forward so that the Council can address impact fees. She said one option is for PPC to approve the plan tonight so it can go forward but add any other concerns in its recommendation. The Council can then decide whether or not to approve the plan.

WALSH asked for more details about the impact fee issue. Heinonen explained the City did not want to do a rate study update until the Parks Strategic Plan was in place. Without knowing what the new parks facilities will be, she continued, the City can't calculate new impact fees. So we have been waiting for the plan to list the new facilities that will add capacity, from which a new impact fee structure can be calculated. WALSH asked what is the timeline for doing that. Heinonen replied

it was hoped that the plan could be approved this summer, and the new rate structure in place by the end of the year. In the meantime, she continued, the City is having to use its old rate structure, so in a sense the City is subsidizing new development because it is having to base fees on old data.

FAUL suggested one option is to approve this plan tonight with the caveat that PPC will have an opportunity to review the goals and policies again in, say, one year. RAHMIG asked if Council approved the plan this year, would we have to wait six years to have another opportunity to change it. Fink replied it could be changed when the Parks Element is updated, which is once a year.

FAUL said his recollection was that, during the work sessions on the Green Necklace with the Park Board, the work session participants were told that protections of wildlife and riparian corridors and so on would be addressed in the Parks Strategic Plan. Niven said he did not recall that commitment. WALSH said at any rate, there appears to be consensus tonight that the Strategic Plan does not adequately address wildlife, open space, tree canopy, and other issues of high importance. LEWIS and others agreed.

RAHMIG said he is tending to favor sending this plan on to Council with the caveat that the goals and policies will come back as soon as feasible so that PPC can review them more in depth. He said his sense is that the Commission would like to have more opportunities for wordsmithing and suggestions. Heinonen said PPC could list those items on which it would like more discussion, and include that in its recommendation to Council. FAUL said he would appreciate another opportunity to review the document with the Park Board. Others agreed. FAUL said he could support using one year as a target date for scheduling another review opportunity. Others agreed.

Commissioner Decision
MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY WALSH that PPC recommend conditional approval of the draft 2018 Parks Strategic Plan Amendments as presented in the staff memo dated June 14, 2018, with the understanding that staff will return to PPC in one year as a suggested target to review the following general areas of concern and specific goals and policies:

- A general reorganization that tracks issues identified by the public as areas of concern and facilitates use by the public;
- Stronger language around signage and wayfinding (Policy C-2.4);
- Formulate the scope for “Green Issaquah,” including habitat restoration, open space, wildlife and riparian corridors, maintenance of noxious weeds, and tree canopy.

And that the draft 2018 Parks Strategic Plan Amendments with the above understanding be forwarded to the Council with a recommendation for approval.

MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL PPC MEMBERS PRESENT.

PUBLIC HEARING: OLDE TOWN SUBAREA PLAN (D)
Leeson made staff’s presentation. The Commissioners convened around a set of diagrams and maps to discuss potential changes to the boundaries of Olde Town. Three options emerged from the discussion: to cut off the southern boundary as shown in blue on the map being examined, which would make Sycamore the southern boundary; leave the southern boundary as it is now; or some other option.

Leeson continued her presentation. She noted that only one amendment has taken place to the original Olde Town Subarea Plan, which was approved in 1999, and that amendment only took out references to the SE Bypass. She provided information about the timeline on this update, and

noted the plan was remanded back to PPC by Council earlier this year because Council decided another public hearing was required. In addition, she continued, an action program was added to the plan, as well as clarification of proposed changes to the Olde Town subarea boundary.

Leeson continued her remarks on Goal A through Goal M in the update (included in the agenda packet). She discussed a potential new Item J-4.5 that addresses limiting or prohibiting formula businesses in Olde Town. She said in further discussions, staff determined that the real issue is perhaps not the use of a business, but rather its appearance. In other words, the business itself is not so much of a concern as the way it appears and fits into Olde Town. To that end, she continued, staff came up with two more options for PPC to consider: (a) As written, plus amend the Olde Town Design Standards to ensure new and expanded businesses within the CBD meet architectural design and scale; and (b) consider establishing a threshold for redevelopment projects that determines at which point noncompliant properties must come into compliance with the Olde Town Design Standards.

RAHMIG said using Domino's Pizza on Front Street, which is a formula business, as an example, under the options (a) and (b) staff has presented, Domino's could move into a historic building as long as certain traditional design standards were met. However, under the 4.5 language, Domino's Pizza would not be able to locate in a new location in Olde Town. Leeson replied that is correct.

LEWIS asked what is included in "professional services." Leeson replied examples include attorneys and accounting offices. LEWIS asked is a grocery store considered a big-box store, and suggested that a better definition of grocery store is needed. Leeson replied that's a good point, and said staff will seek a good definition for further discussion. FAUL asked what is the definition of a formula business. Heinonen replied a formula business is a chain store or franchise store with 10 or more of its businesses located anywhere in the country. LEWIS asked has the City Council taken a position on the options presented to PPC. Leeson replied no; PPC's next step would be to make a recommendation that staff takes to Council for more discussion and a decision.

RAHMIG said he tends to like the language in J-4.5, which would allow no exceptions. RINEHART asked would the Olde Town design standards have to reference limits on square footage. Leeson replied no; the design standards already reference setback requirements, and the setbacks automatically limit the potential square footage of storefronts.

FAUL asked if J-4.5 went into effect, could formula businesses open up in the southern part of Front Street, south of Evans. Leeson replied no; that area is zoned for multifamily only, not for commercial development.

Niven added another consideration is the effect on property owners if formula businesses are prohibited. Generally speaking, he continued, mom-and-pop type businesses cannot afford to pay rents as high as formula businesses can, so essentially by prohibiting formula businesses you would be diminishing the rents that property owners could charge. RINEHART said it seems easier to say "no" to growth from formula businesses, then open it up to them later if property owners are indeed being financially impacted, than to allow formula businesses and then try to restrict them later.

LEWIS asked whether the City Attorney has seen this proposed language. Leeson said the City Attorney has seen the policies, but not this specific language. Heinonen said the City Attorney would help staff write the code. WALSH said she would like the City to reach out to the Downtown Issaquah Association (DIA) and Chamber of Commerce for their comments on this.

RAHMIG said he doesn't like the idea of penalizing property owners from making as much as they can on their investments, although he does like the potential benefits to the community of restricting the kind of tenants allowed in Olde Town. Niven explained how Dollar Tree came to occupy the space once occupied by Front Street Market. Heinonen noted the design standards for Olde Town were not in place when the buildings containing Dollar Tree and Laz-Y-Boy submitted their site development permits.

Heinonen clarified staff is asking for PPC's reactions to a situation where the storefront is a chain store, but it doesn't look like one. In other words, what if it had a logo, storefront appearance, and other features that were in keeping with the rest of Olde Town. Is the use what is objectionable, or the appearance. LEWIS said another consideration is what the business is contributing to the community.

PROBALA said she's not sure she wants to see just mom-and-pop stores in Olde Town. She said there aren't going to be any big-box stores there anyway, because the space just isn't available. The small units that are there could be occupied by national brands that are also desirable places to shop, for example. LEWIS said there are other places in the City for those kinds of businesses to locate, such as in the Highlands. Leeson noted in other cities, businesses such as Ace Hardware have moved into contiguous storefronts in downtown areas by knocking down walls and occupying more than one building, and have still kept the storefront's appearance the same character as the surrounding neighborhood.

FAUL said this issue needs to be thought through in more depth, and asked about the ramifications of a delay in approval by PPC. Leeson replied postponing a decision poses no real problem.

She concluded her presentation with more information on new items added to the plan (pages 11 and 12 in the proposed plan), including "Conduct a financial analysis to identify funding for implementation of the remaining portion of Front Street, Sunset to Alder; Phase II, Front Street, Alder to Dogwood; and Front Street, Dogwood to Gilman;" and "Conduct a financial analysis to identify funding for implementation of Phase II (Alder Festival Street and remaining future phases of the Downtown Streetscape Conceptual Plan)."

Public Comment
PROBALA opened the meeting for public comment at 9:25 PM.

Bill Frisinger, 415 SE Bush Street, Issaquah, said he appreciated the opportunity to provide some input into identifying the boundary for Olde Town tonight. He made some observations about the two large commercial lots on Front Street, now occupied by Dollar Tree and Lay-Z-Boy, and said those two properties are very different from the other, much smaller storefronts on Front Street. He said he doesn't think any big box stores would be interested in the small storefronts. He spoke in favor of focusing on the appearance of the storefronts rather than restricting the type of business as the right approach.

Steve Pereira, 170 NE Dogwood, Issaquah, said Olde Towne doesn't have the same organization that other neighborhoods with a vision have. The result is that Olde Towne residents tend to hear "this is what we want you to become." He continued with his observation that there are pros and cons to removing the Old Route 10 neighborhood from Olde Town, and noted we once thought of Old Route 10, including Boehm's, The Grange, and XXX Drive-In, as its own neighborhood. Looking 20 or 30 years down the road, those are cultural treasures that we don't want to lose to development, so we need to be thinking now of what we can do to protect them.

Pereira continued his comments with numerous suggestions for revisions to the Quality of Life section, vision, plan framework, goals, and policies in the proposed Strategic Plan.

Hearing no additional requests to speak, PROBALA closed the public hearing at 9:45 PM.

Commissioner Discussion
PROBALA said Pereira's comments on the wording in the draft update are extensive and may not all be able to be incorporated, but many of them appear to have merit and should receive further consideration. She asked Pereira to select what he feels are his most important concerns and submit them in writing to staff as soon as possible via e-mail. Pereira agreed to do so.

The Commissioners discussed the option of postponing a decision on making a recommendation on the Olde Town subarea Plan until next week's meeting. WALSH suggested staff also reach out to the DIA and Chamber as well about the formula business issue during that time.

Commissioner Decision
It was the consensus of all PPC members present to continue the public hearing on the Olde Town Subarea Plan update to next Thursday, June 21, 2018, at the PPC meeting to begin at 6:30 PM at the Pickering Room at City Hall, 1775 12th Avenue NW.

FAUL added some observations about the advisability of changing the southern boundary of Olde Town, including a suggestion to include southern Olde Town stakeholders in the decision. Heinonen commented that the public process for Olde Town Subarea Plan has been going on for over a year, including surveys, open houses and public meetings.

ELECTION OF COMMISSION OFFICERS
LEWIS nominated PROBALA to continue as Chair of PPC. There were no other nominations.

MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY FAUL that PROBALA continue as Chair of PPC for the upcoming term. MOTION CARRIED BY THE UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL PPC MEMBERS PRESENT.

PROBALA nominated FAUL to continue as Vice Chair of PPC. There were no other nominations.

MOVED BY PROBALA, SECONDED BY WALSH that FAUL continue as Vice Chair of PPC for the upcoming term. MOTION CARRIED BY THE UNANIMOUS VOTE OF ALL PPC MEMBERS PRESENT.

ADJOURNMENT
With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 9:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary