

CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Planning Policy Commission

6:30 PM
 October 11, 2018

MINUTES

Council Chambers
 135 E. Sunset Way

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commissioners:

Lindsey Walsh, Acting Chair
 Joy Lewis
 Troy Rahmig
 Bill Rinehart
 Jason Voiss, Alt. (Acting as Voting Member)

Administration/Staff:

Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Manager
 Keith Niven, Economic Dev. & Dev. Svcs. Director

Commissioners Not Present (Excused):

Joan Probala, Chair
 Ron Faul, Vice Chair
 AJ McGauley, Alternate

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair, it was MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY RINEHART that WALSH serve as Commission Chair for tonight's meeting. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

WALSH called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- a) **Proposed Amendments to Issaquah Municipal Code 18.07.480 Community Facilities Standards Regarding Municipal Buildings**

Presented by:

Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Manager

Heinonen made staff's presentation. She gave background on PPC's work last year on Compact Schools and Government Facilities in the Issaquah Municipal Code (IMC), including removing references to Government Facilities. Tonight's discussion will address new proposed amendments on "municipal buildings," a term that makes more sense since it could include more buildings than the previously used term, "Government Facilities." She continued with new language for the Table of Community Facilities Standards for Public Schools and Municipal Buildings. She also noted a new piece that is not in the packet, making sure that the Central Issaquah's District Standards Summary Table is consistent with the Table of Community Facilities Standards for Public Schools and Municipal Buildings in the Issaquah Municipal Code (IMC). She displayed photos of buildings from around the region that represent a range of FAR (floor area ratio) values.

She concluded her presentation with a description of the next steps in the review process, leading to tentative action by Council on the proposed amendments in January 2019.

Niven said in looking closely at the definition, references to "County," "school district," "water sewer district," "fire district," "state and federal offices and buildings," and "public schools" no longer fall under the new general category heading of "municipal buildings." Others on the Commission agreed, and offered suggestions. Niven suggested using the term, "institutional" instead of "municipal." LEWIS suggested that a definition of compact schools be included. Staff made a note of all the suggestions and will revise the definition.

LEWIS asked about D-3, Height [of public utility structures]. She asked whether a reference to the intent of having them be the smallest possible footprint would be more appropriate, rather than just limiting the criteria to height. Heinonen replied a reference to the smallest possible footprint is in the standards, including the policy for urban schools, and will check where that reference appears.

Public Comment

WALSH opened the meeting for public comment at 6:45 PM.

Julian Mydlil, 11 Sunset Court NW, Issaquah, gave comments on the proposed new definition, including consideration of “administrative” in place of “municipal.”

Hearing no other requests to speak, WALSH closed the meeting for public comment at 6:47 PM.

Commission Discussion

RAHMIG referred to the proposed change in D.9 (a), from “minimize adverse impacts on nearby residential areas” to “minimize adverse impacts on adjacent residential properties.” Heinonen clarified that “adjacent” means sharing a boundary and is a definable term, whereas “nearby” doesn’t have a clear definition.

WALSH said the table of standards on page 4 of 5 would be more understandable for the public if it clearly stated the impervious and pervious surface information in terms of minimums and maximums. She also noted that the table heading, “Community Facilities Standards for Public Schools and Municipal Buildings,” makes a distinction between public school buildings and other types of municipal buildings.

VOISS asked do the standards speak to flagpoles, which are typically present on municipal buildings. Heinonen replied flagpoles are considered an architectural element, and the land use code does speak to how high they can be.

WALSH suggested that 15.E.16 on page 5 of 5 be reworded as “All new public schools and municipal buildings shall provide a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the required parking in structures.” Staff made a note of it.

Niven used information from King County’s website to calculate the FAR of public buildings around the City including the fire station in the Highlands, the fire station near the Issaquah Park & Ride, Highlands transit center, Issaquah Park & Ride, Grand Ridge Elementary School, Gibson Ek School, and others. He said the City is just starting to have discussions with the Issaquah School District about how ISD would proceed to build schools under the new “compact” requirements. ISD officials have indicated they think they may have problems meeting the minimum FAR of .75, he continued. Fire stations, given their need for driveways that accommodate large vehicles, may also find it difficult, although both the existing fire stations are within the .75 minimum.

WALSH asked how could the code address the need for operational requirements that exceed the minimum, such as large vehicles at fire stations. Niven said one way would be to specify a larger range, so instead of a minimum of .75 and a maximum of 2.0, the range could be a minimum of .4 and a maximum of 2.0. LEWIS said another approach would be to build two smaller buildings rather than one larger one. She said she would rather see a case be made that a given public building should receive an adjustment than to lower the bar for all public buildings. Niven said another option is to include a footnote that would recognize that the minimum could be lowered at the discretion of the Director on a case-by-case basis.

WALSH said our discussion tonight has brought up some good questions about whether public facilities can meet the proposed FAR standard given their operational and other constraints. Niven agreed and said PPC can take more time to consider this amendment.

WALSH suggested that the list of public buildings in the definition could be separated out and assigned different FAR requirements. LEWIS noted that would require having an exhaustive list of all potential building types.

Niven made comments about why the City is looking to restrict FAR. He noted that land is increasingly expensive and scarce, the City's goals include developing more density in the City core, and the City anticipates wanting to build a new City Hall. The question is whether the proposed standard creates too compact of an expectation for municipal buildings such as a new City Hall, which will invariably include a plaza feature. One approach is to subdivide the definition of buildings in the list, or to use a footnote that acknowledges the opportunity for a reasonable allowance for a FAR adjustment.

RAHMIG noted a developer would have to justify why they need an adjustment. RINEHART agreed, and spoke in favor of keeping the standards high. Architects can design to that standard, and there is a process available for an adjustment if necessary. We have examples that indicate it is possible to design to the standard, he continued, and said he is hesitant to lower the standards in anticipation of problems.

WALSH asked where did the .75 minimum FAR standard come from. Niven said it was an existing design standard for Central Issaquah. The City had already adopted the standard for Central Issaquah in envisioning a more urban environment, and it seemed like a good standard to apply to compact schools as well.

WALSH asked are we comfortable recommending code that is likely to require requests for exemptions. RINEHART said if we think the standards are sound, then we could recommend them, and if the next few permit cycles find that they are not workable, then we can take another look at the standards.

WALSH said she wants to set standards that are attainable and don't create obstacles to getting the facilities that the community needs built. She asked staff do you feel comfortable with code that will invariably require administrative adjustments. Niven replied no, and said the Commission seems to be searching for the "sweet spot" between pushing land developers to build differently than when land was more available, and not requiring land developers to attempt the impossible. He said the City's neighborhoods will be getting denser, and new municipal buildings will be fitting in with more dense neighborhoods. At that point, he continued, we will all not be looking in the rear-view mirror but rather seeing how much of a reach it is to meet these new standards with municipal buildings that look differently than in the past. He suggested that staff can spend some time researching more examples of regional buildings with different FAR values, including Issaquah's City Halls, and present them to PPC for additional discussion about keeping the proposed range, changing the range, or making sub-categories of buildings. The Commission agreed with this approach.

LEWIS said her motivation is to be sure the City is making good use of the land it uses for municipal buildings.

RAHMIG said it would be good to have examples for PPC's next discussion of buildings with which members are familiar. WALSH suggested staff's research might include other cities that have

created code for municipal buildings, and how they have addressed exemptions for public spaces such as community centers.

After some discussion, WALSH said tonight's meeting and deliberation will be continued to PPC's meeting on November 15, 2018 at 6:30 PM in the Pickering Room at City Hall NW.

Heinonen asked PPC members to forward the names of any local buildings, particularly those they may be familiar with, for which they would like to have FAR information at the November 15 meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Upcoming Schedule: Heinonen referred to the schedule included in the agenda packet and noted that PPC's public hearing on the proposed Comp Plan Amendments has been reassigned to the December 13, 2018 meeting. Staff will schedule a continuation of the public hearing and prepare research on FAR and municipal buildings for the meeting on November 15, 2018.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary