

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Planning Policy Commission**

6:30 PM
October 25, 2018

MINUTES

Council Chambers
135 E. Sunset Way

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

<p>Commissioners Present: Joan Probala, Chair AJ McGauley, Alt. (Acting as Voting Member) Bill Rinehart Jason Voiss, Alt. (Acting as Voting Member) Lindsey Walsh Commissioners Not Present (Excused): Ron Faul, Vice Chair Joy Lewis</p>	<p>Administration/Staff Present: Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Manager Emily Arteche, Senior Planner Others Present: Steve Crawford, Director of Capital Facilities, ISD Anne Moore, Issaquah School Board President</p>
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1. CALL TO ORDER

PROBALA called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. MOVED BY WALSH, SECONDED BY RINEHART that minutes of the meeting on September 13, 2018 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 4-0.
- b. MOVED BY RINEHART, SECONDED BY WALSH that minutes of the meeting on September 27, 2018 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 4-0.
- c. MOVED BY VOISS, SECONDED BY RINEHART that minutes of the meeting on October 11, 2018 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 4-0.

3. DISCUSSION: Proposed Amendments to Issaquah Comprehensive Plan and Central Issaquah Plan Regarding Urban and Compact Schools (I)

*Presented by: Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Manager
Steve Crawford, Director, Capital Facilities, Issaquah School District
Anne Moore, Issaquah School Board President*

Heinonen began staff's presentation by displaying the draft policies and definitions of urban schools and compact schools, as provided in the agenda packet. She provided some background on recent King County policies and a recent request from the Issaquah School District to the City Council that led to the City reviewing its code on schools. She also briefly described the Commission's discussion on schools over the past year. She referred to new definitions for urban schools and district schools in the agenda packet; new policies US Policy A-1, A-2, and A-3, which have already been reviewed by PPC; and amended policies LU Goal G and LU Policy G-2, G-3, G-4, G-5, G-6, and G-7, which have not been reviewed by PPC. She also referred to the existing code for compact schools recommended by PPC last year (Table 18.07.480, Community Facilities Standards for Public Schools).

She continued by introducing some topics as a way to start the discussion, including the participants' thoughts about allowing an urban school over 65 feet in height; having zero setbacks from the side or rear; locating a school on less than five usable acres; sharing recreational facilities or parking; and any other ways for new schools to be more efficient and urban.

PROBALA said she would like to start with ISD's thoughts on the differences between urban schools and compact schools. Crawford said the key difference is that urban schools are a type of

compact schools located only in central Issaquah. Schools outside central Issaquah that serve the City are compact schools. He continued some of the policies presented in the agenda packet seem to lump the two together, which is problematic. Heinonen explained the City is trying to figure out regulations for urban schools vs. schools outside the central area, and said the definition of the two types of schools is a good place to start the discussion.

Heinonen continued for the urban core alone, the City will be adding about 2,000 housing units to meet its regional growth requirements. Crawford noted we don't have data on how many students will be generated by adding those units, and gave examples from other jurisdictions where new housing generated relatively low numbers of students. So it is hard to predict the capacity we will need, he continued, particularly when we don't have any information on what size those units will be or the market they will be targeted to. So ISD thinks that yes, there will be more children in the urban core area, and the existing Administration site is one we are looking to reserve for the future to accommodate the space they will need, but there are a lot of unknowns, he said.

Crawford continued in the past, we have always had to seek a variance for a school building of three or more stories, and gave examples of recent school construction in the City. The ISD feels that 65 feet is an appropriate standard but will mean that the ISD will likely be seeking variances in the future, he said, and explained how building heights are measured differently depending on the slope of the property.

PROBALA asked for Crawford's comments on the definitions. He expressed concern about designing for biking and walking only in the urban schools definition, and explained how that is problematic given the number of square miles that the schools would serve. WALSH noted the City does have some non-bus schools. Crawford agreed there are a few schools that are located such that they are primarily walking and biking only, but noted their unusual circumstances. He also noted how schools are used has changed since those schools were built. He explained how the areas around Seattle schools that didn't include parent pick-up and drop-off space or adequate parking are over-congested and school neighbors are unhappy. The Commission discussed how student pick-up and drop-off provisions function now in the Highlands, specifically at Grand Ridge Elementary.

After additional discussion, the Commissioners and ISD representatives agreed to change the definition of urban schools to address Crawford's comments about the need for adequate pick-up and drop-off space. There was consensus to alter the definition of urban schools to "Urban schools... fit on a smaller site than Compact Schools, fit gracefully into the neighborhoods they serve, and are primarily designed to encourage children to walk or bike to." Crawford indicated the rest of the definition is acceptable.

WALSH referred to a comment submitted prior to the meeting in writing by Connie Marsh ("*What happens if they build schools on large lots? Do they still get the impervious surface allowances etc?*"). Heinonen referred to LU G-5, which speaks to usable acres ("Siting of compact and urban schools should reflect land scarcity by using smaller footprints, on lots smaller than that of recommended state minimum acreage, i.e., sites should be less than five usable acres."). Crawford spoke at length of the difficulty of siting schools on as little as five acres, and gave examples. He said a more realistic standard would be something like 6-7 acres for an elementary school, 11-12 acres for a middle school, and 20 acres for a high school. RINEHART asked do those numbers take into account the possibility of shared facilities. Crawford explained that some facilities can be shared between, say, a middle school and a high school, but shared facilities also pose difficulties. Moore noted that physical education is a regular part of the curriculum, and relying on shared facilities for outdoor educational activities is not always realistic.

Arteche noted Gibson Ek School looks to be a very compact school, and asked how do students there meet their recreational needs. Crawford referred to the facilities available at the school, and

noted it is a unique school at which students do a lot of internships and are not on campus on a daily basis.

The Commission and ISD continued their review of the proposed new policies, which included the following discussion points:

UC Policy A-1. PROBALA asked Crawford for his views on specifying the use of “transit routes” to transport children to schools. Heinonen said that is in reference to providing “alternatives to school buses...” VOISS noted the troublesome word seems to be “alternatives,” because school buses are the best way to move the greatest number of children to school, not cars or public transit. Crawford and Moore agreed. WALSH suggested rewriting the policy to speak directly to safe bike and pedestrian routes, and not lump them together with transit. She suggested “... and nearby transit routes” and eliminating “to make it easier...” Staff will take another look at it. Heinonen noted this is an aspirational policy, not a requirement in the code.

UC Policy A-2, UC Policy A-3. No changes.

LU Goal G. Moore asked does the land use goal cover all of Issaquah. Heinonen replied yes.

LU Policy G-2. No changes.

LU Policy G-3 and G-4. The Commission and ISD discussed the proposed language (“Compact and urban schools should be designed as ‘bus priority’ instead of ‘car priority...’”) at length. Moore explained that Issaquah’s schools receive children from a large radius, not just from the City, and there will never be, say, a walkable-only middle school that can serve kids who will be coming from Sammamish, Renton, Bellevue, and so on. RINEHART asked does Issaquah have enough students for schools that are comprised of just Issaquah students. Crawford described all the factors involved in locating a school, including the primary driver, which is the availability of land. Moore described plans for a new elementary school in Sammamish that will serve students from both Sammamish and Issaquah, and noted we build schools where the students are who need them. Crawford gave projections for growth patterns in Issaquah and the surrounding community generally, and the current state of overcrowding in City schools. He noted if the City determined that schools would have to be located on five acres or less, then ISD would definitely have to look outside the City for a location. Moore noted that there has to be enough density to have a walkable school. Crawford added topography is also a factor, and described how hilly terrain has affected how students access schools in Talus and the Highlands.

After additional discussion, WALSH suggested taking out the reference to urban schools in Policy G-4 and have it apply to compact schools only. She also suggested reordering the references to walk and bike priority, followed by car priority, for urban schools. The Commissioners suggested adding the idea of incentivizing using buses or other means to access schools, which would minimize traffic and negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. Moore added that it isn’t possible to prevent parents from dropping off and picking up their kids. Crawford agreed, and said we will always need to accommodate car traffic when siting a school. Crawford also suggested that “... should be located to primarily serve students from the immediate community....” be removed from Policy G-3. Staff will review the suggestions and make appropriate changes.

LU Policy G-5. The Commissioners discussed how to express an aspiration to use land efficiently and have the smallest footprint possible. Crawford said the reality is that there are no sites of, say, 40 acres available, and even if there were, the ISD does not have enough money to develop more than is needed. He continued some sites also will have steep, unbuildable slopes, and we may also want to preserve trees, both of which would constrain how much of the site is used. He added more compact buildings are generally more efficient than the sprawling, suburban model that was

used years ago. Moore added five acres would not be realistic for anything other than possibly an elementary school.

The Commissioners, Crawford, and Moore continued to discuss whether G-5 should specify “less than five usable acres,” specify a maximum number of acres depending on the type of school, or just reference the desire to use space as efficiently as possible. The consensus was to eliminate a reference to a specific number.

RINEHART asked about how the State determines the “state minimum acreage” referred to in G-5. Crawford replied the State’s parameters were established years ago and apply to jurisdictions across the entire state. He also explained the variance process ISD has used in the past to receive approval from the State in siting new schools. [*McGAULEY arrived at this time.*]

LU Policy G-6. The participants discussed the reference to “avoiding the use of portable and modular units.” Crawford said some use of portables is probably inevitable, and gave examples. He and Moore gave more details about how, when and why portables are used. PROBALA suggested stating “minimizing” instead of “avoiding.” Crawford said that would be an improvement, in his view.

McGAULEY asked about whether a potential footprint for portables is included when a school is designed, specifically whether parcels are set aside in advance for portables. He also referred to the recently approved bond issue that generated the funds that will be used for the next generation of new schools to serve Issaquah. Crawford said ISD has to strike a balance between asking voters to approve a bond issue that will allow ISD to build the capacity that is needed, but not more than what is necessary. Moore said it is a challenge to find the right amount for the bond issue that will give us what we need. VOISS asked what would ISD do to accommodate growth if the need for capacity was greater than anticipated. Crawford replied one of the solutions would be to use portables. Moore said changing school boundaries might also be used to meet demand, particularly if portables were not available as an option.

WALSH said she would be more comfortable with stronger wording than just minimize for urban schools. PROBALA said saying “avoid” and “minimize” doesn’t mean that ISD will never use a portable, just that not using portables should be a goal. Crawford said it is kind of a self-fulfilling goal, because the reality is that schools are going to have very compact footprints without much additional space for portables, given the scarcity of land.

After further discussion, the consensus was to use “avoiding the use of portables and modular units” for urban schools, and “minimizing the use of portables and modular units” for compact schools.

LU Policy G-7. No changes.

Heinonen displayed the discussion topics introduced at the beginning of the meeting and asked participants for their thoughts.

On the height issue, Crawford said a 65-foot maximum means a school could only be three stories, and in his view the maximum needs to be higher, particularly in the urban core. Heinonen noted other buildings in the urban core can be 125 feet. The participants discussed how schools could be designed with, say, eight stories, and how that might work. The consensus was to change the maximum to 65 feet, or the maximum of neighboring zones, whichever is higher.

On the zero-setback issue, Crawford discussed how zero-foot setbacks for the side and rear of a building would impact school security, access, how the building is used, how parents could drop-off and pick-up their children, and so on. He said an urban school would likely be located in a high-

density area, and he thinks having zero-foot setbacks for the side and rear of an urban school would be workable. Heinonen asked whether the range of a maximum setback from the street of zero to 20 feet, for both urban schools and compact schools, is acceptable. Crawford replied yes.

McGAULEY referred to the proposed minimum floor area ratio (FAR) of .75, and noted that number excludes recreational space and parking. He said it would be interesting to see FAR data for existing schools in the district, both with and without recreational space and parking. Crawford said he will supply that information before the next discussion.

PROBALA asked staff to outline the next steps in the review process. Heinonen said the definitions and policies will come back to PPC for a public hearing at its meeting on December 13. She added the December public hearing will address only the proposed policies and definitions; the accompanying regulations will be reviewed in 2019.

4. OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

5. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary