

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Planning Policy Commission**

6:30 PM
May 27, 2021

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Alternate Meeting Format: On March 6, 2020 the Mayor declared a civil emergency due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 24, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-28 relating to the COVID-19 emergency and open public meetings. The proclamation has been extended. Due to these factors, the meeting was held using a remote meeting platform.

Commissioners Present:

Ron Faul, Chair
Jason Voiss, Vice Chair
Sarah Bader
Joy Lewis
Nina Milligan
Matt Monahan
Richard Zaragoza, Alternate

Administration/Staff:

Christen Leeson, Senior Planner
Minnie Dhaliwal, CP&D Director
Katie Cote, BHC, Planning Consultant
Lucy Sloman, Land Dev. Manager

CALL TO ORDER

FAUL, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

FAUL asked for any corrections or changes to minutes of May 13, 2021, and there were none. Minutes are approved.

REGULAR BUSINESS

a) **IMC Title 18 Land Use Code: Draft of Schedule, Outreach Plan, and Scope, (D)**

Presented by:

Minnie Dhaliwal, CP&D Director

Presentation

Dhaliwal presented some background on the update to Title 18 that the City has initiated (pages 9-11 of 25 and Attachment A). She gave some basic information on what land use code is; the history of the City's land use code, including both annual reviews and a more comprehensive update process that began in 2019; the contract between the City and the consultant for the update, BHC Consultants (BHC); and the framework for land use, including the Growth Management Act and other state laws. She also described the City's adopted visions, goals, and policies (page 10) and 13 other issues developed by the Council's Land Use Code Ad Hoc Committee (Attachment B).

She continued with the broad goals of the City's Strategic Plan, which include updating the land use code. She described how Title 18 is a tool for the City to implement its plans, programs, and processes. She used parking and circulation in Central Issaquah as examples of how code in Title 18 would apply in the land use review process, and gave more details about the review process itself.

LEWIS asked is staff seeking input on the goals themselves at tonight's meeting. She said she sees some things missing from the goals. Dhaliwal said the goals have been established by City Council. Staff would be happy to take any feedback on the goals to Council, and suggested LEWIS email her comments and concerns on the goals to Dhaliwal separately.

MILLIGAN asked what are you asking for from PPC tonight. Dhaliwal referred to “Things to Consider” on page 11. LEWIS asked for direction on how best to give feedback on the document. Dhaliwal suggested discussing the schedule and public outreach first tonight, after Cote's presentation.

Cote continued staff's presentation on the update schedule (page 23 of 25), including where work on the update now stands. She said the drafting phase is expected to take about a year; as final drafts are available, they will be presented to PPC for review. A final, complete draft is expected by mid-2022, with adoption by Council anticipated in September 2022.

She continued with how the Administration is proposing to interface with PPC on this important effort, including joint meetings with other boards and commissions. She gave examples. She highlighted options for grouping the topics, with tentative dates attached. She explained the public outreach activities that are planned, including virtual open houses, targeted outreach to stakeholders, outreach to the City Council, a possible survey tool, and the City's website. She said the goal is to have a transparent process during which the public and stakeholders have opportunities to provide feedback for consideration. She described the guidance staff is hoping to get from PPC tonight.

Public Comment on Title 18 Update

Deepa Sivarajan, Policy Manager with Climate Solutions, commented on the process. She encouraged the City and PPC to incorporate climate as an important consideration and factor in the land use code as Title 18 is updated. She spoke in favor of addressing climate through the City's land use code and offered to provide resources from Climate Solutions to the City during the Title 18 update process.

Ann Fletcher, People for Climate Action, expressed appreciation for tonight's presentation; the materials and links provided were very informative, and the public outreach efforts are commendable. She continued she would like to see the City ensure that its many policies, plans and regulations address climate change; clarify how the Comprehensive Plan has, or will be, reviewed for current, high-quality climate policies; how that will drive climate-related Title 18 regulatory codes; review the Strategic Plan to include, or at least address, the City's plans that include climate; develop a Climate Action Plan in conjunction with other plans that address climate; and fulfill its commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by 50 percent by 2030 and other climate goals.

Connie Marsh said the gaps analysis provided does not indicate whether we are looking at the appropriate policies from which to build a code; the gaps analysis needs to address the gaps that exist in our policies. The City's Strategic Plan is a focus document, and a large number of the policies that we need to guide us in the future are missing, particularly for habitat, climate, and so on. Most members of the commissions aren't familiar with what's missing, and a discussion by the community about what they want is also missing and is needed. She continued she would like to see education of all the commissions addressed on topics such as transportation and the environment. Very few commissioners have watched the land use code in action, and they would benefit by going through a project review process to get an idea of what the impact of the City's code is. She continued it is important to understand the review flow and how important the code language is to a developer. She spoke again of the need for education, and encouraged commissions such as PPC to have at least two meetings on each topic so they can make better decisions and understand the context for those decisions. Lastly, she said the schedule provided in the agenda package isn't clear.

Commissioner Questions/Discussion

VOISS clarified tonight's goals as providing feedback on the schedule and how PPC will interface with the Title 18 update, not to debate or offer suggestions for content. Dhaliwal replied we are looking for PPC's feedback on the concept of having joint meetings with other boards and commissions, whether the five groupings for topics shown on page 23 makes sense, and whether the anticipated level of involvement is manageable for PPC. VOISS said there is a lot to learn here, and PPC is being asked to do a very big lift. He spoke of the need for more "runway" before PPC gets to the point of making recommendations on these important issues. We need more time to discuss and hear from other commissions and the public, then digest what we have heard, refocus, provide our comments, and make recommendations. The schedule as it is presented is inadequate and is setting us up for failure, he added.

FAUL reiterated the three questions for PPC on page 11 (are the five major groups appropriate; should PPC have joint meetings with other commissions; is the current schedule workable) and the five areas for feedback from PPC in Cote's presentation.

LEWIS said the color code used in the Schedule for Title 18 Update (page 23) wasn't clear; it should be reconfigured to make more sense. She said there is too little information about the proposed five buckets on page 23. It's hard to say whether adequate time has been allowed when there is no way to gauge how much of Title 18 each section represents. She continued she can't give more feedback without more data. She also said she would like to see more education on each of these issues, including context, more feedback from the community, more scheduled work sessions, and more opportunities for the public to be able to view the update's progress and give feedback.

MILLIGAN agreed. She said the Title 18 update should be the top priority, as it is a matter of great importance and urgency, and the rest of PPC's work should be reprioritized accordingly. She spoke in favor of allowing more time for PPC to discuss the draft documents, hear from the public and other stakeholders, and digest that feedback before being required to make a recommendation. PPC needs to look at draft code at both the preliminary draft stage and also during the process of finalizing it. She said another issue she'd like to mention is how does this update potentially affect pending permit applications; will we have a flood of permit applications in advance of new code requirements. She also asked Dhaliwal to provide an emailed copy of the presentation used tonight.

MONAHAN agreed. He said he likes the concept of a minimum of two touches on every issue listed on page 23. He said having time for education and discussion is important, and spoke in favor of doing that in joint sessions with other boards and commissions, then developing a recommendation in PPC-only sessions. He said education should include the context in which changes are being proposed and what we are trying to accomplish.

FAUL agreed. He said other commissions are the subject matter experts in areas like the environment and transportation, and joint meetings make a lot of sense.

BADER affirmed others' comments, and said hearing her fellow Commissioners say more processing time is needed is validating. She said information that is confusing for us will be confusing for the public, too. For meaningful engagement to occur, how information is displayed is important. She also agreed with MONAHAN's comments about the need for education, context for changes, and ensuring at least two touch points. She said she could envision having joint sessions as the first touch, then a deeper dive by PPC in a second touch. She also asked where climate would be included in the groupings shown on page 23. Dhaliwal replied it would be in the sustainability group. PPC will also be having deeper discussions in the coming months on the City's Climate Action Plan.

ZARAGOZA agreed with earlier comments, particularly Marsh's comments on the need for education—the more, the better. He asked what are the ramifications of more than doubling the amount of time staff has planned for this effort. Cote explained that PPC's feedback about wanting two additional touches when the draft is created would essentially double the number of meetings that have been laid out in the schedule. Council has set a deadline of September 2022 for adoption of the update, she continued, and a change in that deadline would need to be made by Council. FAUL asked whether Council could be approached about pushing out the deadline. This is a top priority, he said, and is more urgent than other issues.

VOISS agreed with earlier comments, particularly MONAHAN's point about joint meetings being the first touch on an issue, followed by a deeper dive and recommendation by PPC. He said PPC will also have to trust the other boards and commissions. He said if the Title 18 update is indeed the priority, then we should be able to move around other topics on PPC's plate as needed, and ask Council for more time if necessary. It's important to get this right; it will affect a lot of people, he stated.

LEWIS said it's a lot of work, but PPC can do this lift without having to push out the deadline. She continued she doesn't favor asking Council for a new deadline, but rather adding special meetings and setting a more aggressive schedule for getting the work done. Maybe another board or commission could host some of the meetings, she added. She also said she thinks equity needs its own section on the land use code schedule. We could all use more education on equity issues, including what mistakes have been made in the past and how to address them going forward. Equity seems to be missing both in the document and in the schedule, she noted.

Dhaliwal said this is a legislative process, and so we can meet one-on-one or with several of you without violating the Open Meetings Act if a member really wants to dig deep on a particular issue. We can give background so you feel comfortable making decisions, and we are not limited to just official PPC meetings. She continued staff is happy to meet with you separately or in small groups, particularly if you have a passion or interest in a particular area. Staff will go back with the feedback received tonight and develop a revised schedule, including opportunities for education, probably for each section.

MILLIGAN commented one of the questions PPC was asked tonight was whether the five major groups are appropriate. She said the groupings make sense to her, and are do-able with the caveat that they are broad groups, not silos, and will also include context.

REPORTS

a) Council Updates

Presented by:

Christen Leeson, Senior Planner

Leeson said at the Council's last Study Session, the sign code was remanded back with revisions as part of the Title 18 update. Sloman continued it was remanded to the Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Title 18, with instructions to look at further reformatting and reorganizing to streamline the code. She gave examples of where additional review has been requested. The Council also asked to explore being less prescriptive and regulatory, and to really focus on what the sign code is trying to accomplish and why we are regulating signage.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Bailey asked for clarification about recent and potential changes in the code that pertain to parking requirements for businesses in Olde Town. Leeson replied the code was amended in

2020 to increase the area where an expansion of existing businesses and additions to existing buildings would not require more parking. However, there was no discussion of expanding beyond the current area, which is on Sunset Way, Front Street, and a small area just east and west of Front Street. She offered to provide Mr. Bailey with a link to the appropriate map.

Ann Fletcher said she was heartened by the discussion tonight. She said she agrees that an extended deadline isn't needed, and appreciates the creative ideas for receiving feedback, such as surveys, focus groups, joint meetings, and smaller group meetings with staff for a deeper dive. The climate community is ready to work hard with you to learn and do our best for our community, she said.

Connie Marsh agreed tonight's discussion has been great. She said other than possibly the Development Commission, the other boards and commissions just receive staff presentations with the assumption that staff is presenting the appropriate code, but actually the other boards and commissions likely know very little about the code. They will need an equal amount of education if you are looking to them to be subject matter experts. She suggested using videos or other "education in a can" ways that people can receive more education on topics on their own time.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Upcoming Schedule: Leeson referred to the previous discussion tonight on revising PPC's schedule for the remainder of 2021, and outlined possible topics for PPC meetings on June 10 and 24.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business to conduct, FAUL adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary