



## MINUTES

### PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION MEETING 6:30 p.m. -Thursday, December 9, 2021

*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.*

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#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Faul.

Commissioners Present: Chair Faul, Vice-Chair Voiss, Commissioners Bader, Lewis, Milligan, Monahan, and Zaragoza (Alternate)

Excused Absence: None

Staff Present: Minnie Dahliwal, Director, Community Planning & Development  
Holly Keaton, Senior Planner  
Lucy Sloman, Land Development Manager

#### 2. Public Comments

- There were no written comments or requests to speak.

#### 3. Regular Business

- a) **Education: Title 18 Procedures and Administration (D) (00:02)**  
*Presented by Minnie Dahliwal, Director, community Planning & Development*

Dahliwal presented the overview and described issues and suggestions. Policy guidance was sought regarding Hillside and Terrain Management and Wireless Communication Facilities.

CHAIR FAUL paused the presentation at the end of Hillside and Terrain Management for questions for each subject to be addressed individually.

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COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN thanked Dahliwal for the efficient presentation and stated that the suggestion of comparisons to other cities was appreciated. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked what is missing between the current tree retention policy and forested hillsides, interacting with the canopy. Dahliwal replied that the Tree Canopy Study had informed the Climate Action Plan regarding what the canopy goal should be. The Tree Canopy goal of 51% has been met throughout the city. The aspirational goal is now 55% based on the new adopted policy. How this translates to Title 18 on a parcel-by-parcel basis is being examined. A canopy-based approach giving more credit to larger trees is being studied. Feedback sought at this time is if a threshold should be higher if a steeper slope exists. Slooman replied that some tree canopy goals have not yet been fit together and Commissioner thoughts are hoped for to assist the process.

COMMISSIONER LEWIS thanked staff for clarifying the question of COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN. COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated that the city recommended a 20% threshold for the overlays for design standards, but information in the presentation was based on 15% and asked for clarification regarding the 5% difference. Slooman replied that many communities have guidelines or performance standards as opposed to prescriptive standards. The reason for the 15% figure is that Urban Village hillside guidelines start at 15% and historically 15% has been the baseline. All standards are put forth in a prescriptive way at 15% and fire code allows up to 15%. Meeting road standards with all other standards in place may be difficult. An idea has been to bundle standards that start at 15% slopes from others that start at 20%, some more performance at 15% and more prescriptive for steeper slopes. There have been struggles using previous tools in place at 15%. COMMISSIONER LEWIS asked how many homeowners will be affected and appreciated that design standards and tips for building within Seattle permits had been included in the presentation. Regarding soil retention, three examples - modern, extreme and the desired result would be helpful. Slooman replied that slope is difficult to illustrate in two dimensions. The value of conversations with the Planning Policy Commission is in hearing where sensitivity and priorities are. COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated liking the idea of a density bonus transfer as a building tool, to stay true to the tree priorities while still being able to honor property rights. Dahliwal replied that the difference between 15% and 20% on a map is satellite data translated in general. Granular information regarding impacted lots will not be in those images. COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated that regarding director level decision making, without surveying every property the evaluation is difficult and the granular level information is needed.

CHAIR FAUL stated that the explanations of Dahliwal and Slooman regarding the percentages had been very good.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that page 10 of 20 in the staff packet states that over 5,000 parcels in the City of Issaquah have a slope of over 15%. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked how the slope of a site is determined if the site is mixed slope. Slooman replied that there are several methodologies such as looking at an average over the site. How other codes have achieved site slope percentages will be researched. Communities will be consulted regarding how well the codes are working. Many had been adopted within the 2015-16 period and

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internet searches are easier to conduct today. Dahliwal stated that there is not a preferred methodology at this time and broader guidance and nuances will be worked on.

CHAIR FAUL asked why Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) would be considered on steep, forested slopes if not developable to begin with. CHAIR FAUL also asked for clarification regarding the traction and safety limitations of vehicles on streets between snow or moss. Sloman replied that in example, Issaquah Heights had been developed at a maximum of 15% but the percentage has been reduced to 12% within the last 10 years. Both tried to balance safety and access issues with the need to be able to obtain access to legal lots. Dahliwal replied that 15% is the standard Fire Department regulation from fire code and the need for fire trucks, but not necessarily the need of an average vehicle. Grading on private driveways involve many considerations depending on going up and down from the main road to access. CHAIR FAUL stated being most interested specifically in street egress. Dahliwal replied that the street standard would not be changed to 20%, but that if a property is 20% additional design standards begin. Sloman replied that the reason streets had been selected to show grades in the presentation is that some elements can be seen with depth perception. CHAIR FAUL asked for clarification that streets were not being discussed but rather property. Sloman replied yes. In addition, staff are not proposing transferring TDRs off steep slopes, but rather on properties at 15-20% and up to 40% that could be developed now; allowing some development rights to be removed as a way of encouraging less building on the property.

COMMISSIONER VOISS asked for clarification regarding the Talus development. Sloman replied that the main drive for Talus is 12%. Shangri La goes to 14%, built during an era when up to 15% roads was allowed. James Bush Road, a 20% plus example, is an example of a period before restrictions and attention to development standards. COMMISSIONER VOISS asked if the over 5,000 parcels over 15% mentioned in the staff packet are built on. Sloman replied that lots shown are total. COMMISSIONER VOISS stated interest in seeing how much of a lighter pink shade on a rendering is already built out. TDRs for 20-40% is probably a good idea.

COMMISSIONER BADER asked for the slope of parcel nine. Sloman replied that the information was not available at the time, but from memory, the parcel has significant topographic change from one side to another. Sloman gave examples of how Talus and Issaquah Highlands are examples of clustering.

CHAIR FAUL opened Public Comment for Hillsides and Terrain Management (00:47). Sloman stated that one person requested to speak.

- Connie Marsh stated that there are a lot of slopes in Issaquah but how contiguous they are is the question. The map showing pink is not necessarily one continuous rise. A 40% grade having to rise for a 20' length before being considered a Critical Area slope is a lot for a normal parcel. The map does not appear to be concise enough, and parcel by parcel needs to be considered. Regarding reducing buffers for slopes for development, addressing water coming off hills and glacier till should be considered. The rationale for keeping forested hillsides is for habitat, climate,

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turbidity into streams and soil stability. The conversation should not be who can build where, but rather why slopes are desired to be retained; the ability to build safely and aesthetics then can come into play. The Forest Practices Permit has been used by the city without any public process and understanding how the Permit will interface with code would be helpful. Manmade slopes should go through the same studies. The existing Comprehensive Plan has a gap that indicates that Talus and Issaquah Highlands will be reforested given any opportunity to do so; policy direction is already in place. Marsh asked if there were only a gap in code or if policy does honestly need to be changed. Retaining walls have been a consistent conversation. Title 18 is only one part of the Clearing and Grading code. Language will be needed for both. The opinion of Marsh was for 15%. There is a lot of work ahead and the conversation is appreciated.

CHAIR FAUL opened Commissioner Comments (00:55).

COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated agreement with the public comments of Connie Marsh. Many places in Issaquah need to be reforested.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that 15% to 20% seems arbitrary and not purposeful to the greater caution looked for towards slope stability. There is an expectation that Talus and Issaquah Highlands will be reforested. Currently, the TDR sounds like a good idea on the surface. Regarding walls and grading, a 10' high, 35' long wall was always too large and policies that encourage working with the hillside is a better option, reducing the use of walls to change topography. Distance between terraced walls could be increased. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked if more contrasting colors could be used on the map for clarity. The more learned, the better prepared everyone involved will be for the next discussion.

CHAIR FAUL asked regarding forested hillsides, section A, if forests have cleared should the sites considered forested be required to replay at the canopy to an elevated forest level; the answer is yes, because soils have not changed, and the trees are needed for run-off, turbidity and reducing carbon footprint - at least 55% or as many trees as possible.

Dahliwal asked if there was broad agreement to keep 15%. The Commissioners generally agreed. The feedback was good and would be taken into consideration.

Keaton continued with a Wireless Communication Facilities overview (1:02). A recent study has identified that the community views improved wireless and broadband services as a top three goal. Only a consensus was being sought from the Commissioners at this meeting.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated realizing that there are also other factors to consider inside the issue such as Federal regulations and minimum requirements. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN had three questions; clarification regarding what qualifies

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as a city pole, if distance between poles depends on the performance of the cellular service, and if undergrounding utilities will be a factor. Keaton replied that regarding poles, wireless facilities typically use light poles, but other types could be considered. There are design standards that can integrate small cell facilities on a light pole to appear as a part of the light pole design. In distancing, cell service determines; in a city with trees and infrastructure, poles for high levels of service should be approximately two miles from each other. An inventory of city poles will be needed. Regarding undergrounding, fiber works in coordination with actual facilities. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that in the city, all streetlights are not necessarily owned by the city, some PSE owned, and PSE may receive more income for allowing cell service on poles. Keaton replied that the comment of Commissioner Milligan was correct. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked for clarification that the city requires that all but high tension power lines be undergrounded, and that small cell relies on a radio signal between poles and does not require wiring other media from pole to pole so that undergrounding is not an issue for 5G. Keaton replied that specific details are not available at this meeting and that the goal of the conversation at this time was to be high level for consensus from the Commissioners regarding interest in having staff research adjustments in regulation. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated understanding that the conversation is only around city owned poles at this time.

CHAIR FAUL asked for an example of what cell sites would look like on a city pole, and what can be controlled on city poles versus PSE poles, out of city control; is there an advantage to bring cell sites onto city poles and rebuilding new poles to allow the control of installation of a 5G cell tower for revenue and design. Keaton replied that research has not been done at this time regarding whether the city has an interest in capturing revenue. The benefit would be to improve service to the community. Slides showing examples of poles were shown.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked for clarification that many poles would need to be taller than current decorative light poles to support cell service.

CHAIR FAUL asked if poles being placed in hilly areas would offer broader coverage and be less visible. Keaton replied that the idea is an option. The goal of the conversation currently is to know if there is interest in exploring further.

COMMISSIONER ZARAGOZA stated that good cell coverage is very important. Good signals are difficult to find in the Downtown area. Strict controls will be needed, and the city should be involved with planning the locations of towers. Keaton replied that there are codes in the region that apply the mentioned standards, in example Renton, which has set designs for poles and clear guidelines, making the process easier for the provider in knowing what will be allowed from the beginning.

COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated that coverage for two miles is a macro cell tower, very different from small cell towers. Small cell towers extend approximately 200 feet. Poles would need to be located throughout residential neighborhoods. The two may need

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to not be packaged together. Burying fiber in the community may be the best chance of dealing with the terrain and residential neighborhoods. How to better partner with broadband providers with more people working from home is another conversation. A thorough engineering review regarding the effects of 5G is needed. A fee rate structure is another conversation. Based on what has been presented, no change whatsoever would be recommended. CHAIR FAUL asked if there were a question for staff, and COMMISSIONER LEWIS asked for clarification that coverage of two miles refers to macro cell towers and not small cell. Keaton replied correct regarding city poles, and construction of micro and macro facilities. COMMISSIONER LEWIS asked for clarification that macro cell towers are not the same size as light poles, and Keaton replied correct.

CHAIR FAUL opened the topic to public comment (01:29).

- Connie Marsh thanked COMMISSIONER LEWIS and stated having followed the wireless conversation in Issaquah for several years. Each cell company will hope to put a company box on each pole. Poles must be very tall, particularly in residential neighborhoods and views would be further obstructed. The processes that companies must follow are appropriate and public conversation is needed. Cell company priorities are for profit. Small cells are more for cars driving through than for residents. A survey to determine exactly where cell service drops is needed, and those locations are where new cell service should be added. The conclusion of the same conversation previously within the city was good.
- Mary Lynch stated support of the comments of Connie Marsh and thanked COMMISSIONER LEWIS for comments, as well. Clear site distance is needed for the technology to work and hiding in trees is not realistic. Skyline heights will be required in neighborhoods. Current providers have opted to not update lines while waiting for potential changes such as this and companies should be made to update regardless. Fiber optic is an option.

Sloman stated that companies had not initiated this conversation, but rather concerns and fear from the community during remote work times about not being able to access service.

CHAIR FAUL opened Commissioner Comments (01:37).

CHAIR FAUL stated that the Commissioners may not be able to make a judgement call on cell service as an inferior product from providers may play a role. CHAIR FAUL stated being satisfied with broadband and not in favor of 5G service in neighborhoods. Residents do not appear to be convinced around the safety of 5G to the environment at this time.

COMMISSIONER BADER asked for clarification regarding which type of cell service is being discussed, broadband or cell phone service. Good coverage is important but

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what the gaps are needs to be identified. Keaton replied that the goal of the conversation at this time is only to determine if there is an interest in pursuing amendments to 2018 regulations. COMMISSIONER BADER stated that the subject is worthy of a deeper look.

Keaton stated that the Commission appeared to be divided regarding changes. CHAIR FAUL replied that there would be two additional comments before addressing the determination.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that the needs of the community must be served. The changes proposed are narrow in perspective. The bigger context is not only regarding health but also technology and interference. The system is complicated and there isn't a simple solution. The conversation in current form does not allow for meaningful participation. Large scale cell towers are ugly and view blocking, and small camouflaged poles will not deliver the service.

COMMISSIONER ZARAGOZA stated that hotspots are important. Wired internet is extremely expensive. Access shouldn't require sacrifice. There may be middle ground in a compromise between macro and micro towers. There could be a mix of different solutions if the issue is pursued. The issue should be investigated, and blanket answers are not needed at this time.

COMMISSIONER MONAHAN stated agreement with the other Commissioners.

Sloman stated that staff hoped to leave the meeting with the correct understanding of the desire of the Commission. What had been heard had been a mixed message. COMMISSIONER LEWIS stated that there is an idea of staff moving forward to explore, despite opposing viewpoints. At the next presentation, what will be gained from what is proposed should be clear; precisely what a small cell pole will provide and what large poles will provide in broadband and connectivity. The Commission had examined the subject in the past, but new Commissioners will need to see detail. A proposal will need to include, in example; service allowed, size of equipment, options for design, fee structures and a map identifying coverage issue areas. Keaton stated appreciation of the fine-tuned points.

Dahliwal stated that the conversation had been good. The distinction between broadband and cell technology is changing and so any barriers in code that could prevent improved service while maintaining city aesthetics are the focus. Coverage provided by a particular facility today will change. New guidance from the FCC will be incorporated.

CHAIR FAUL asked if there are any permit requests from providers for small cell towers. Keaton replied that permit requests are received regularly for improving or replacing antennas on existing poles, but no new 5G requests have been received. Dahliwal

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replied that companies are focusing on urban businesses for more return on investment.

#### 4. Reports

##### a) Council Update (01:57)

*Presented by Lucy Sloman, Land Development Manager, for Christen Leeson, Senior Planner*

Dahliwal stated that Council had adopted the Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

Sloman asked if general public comment had been replaced by individual public comments. CHAIR FAUL replied yes, but that time remained if there were further requests to speak.

- Connie Marsh stated that the Climate Action Plan had passed, but Council added a substantial change. There had been a Council comment that more public review should be obtained. Extra goals for existing house reduction of fossil fuel use had been added. The Planning Policy Commission should have the written change presented for sufficient review.

Dahliwal stated that more details can be emailed. The King County Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C) has already been agreed to, but another metric for measuring progress had been added. Sloman read from the Council summary. CHAIR FAUL asked if the change is what the city proposed to city council, or a city council action. Dahliwal replied that the action was in response to public comments, an amendment passed at the council meeting.

COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that adoption at the council level did not appear to include a public hearing and asked if an amendment can be made in that situation. Dahliwal replied that the Boards and Commissions hold public hearings, and the council still received comments during council review. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN asked if a public hearing had been held. Dahliwal replied yes, the entire Climate Action Plan went through a robust public participation process. COMMISSIONER MILLIGAN stated that although the Plan is adopted by resolution, the Plan will not be municipal code. COMMISSIONER LEWIS asked Dahliwal to email a link to the council discussion for review.

#### 5. Other Business/Announcements (02:06)

##### a) Upcoming Schedule

Sloman stated that the next meeting would be January 13, 2022.

#### 6. Adjournment

With no further business to conduct, CHAIR FAUL adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC  
Recording Secretary