



CITY OF
West Linn

PLANNING COMMISSION / COMMISSION FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Minutes of March 16, 2011

Members present: Chair Robert Martin, Vice Chair Michael Babbitt, Gail Holmes, Holly Miller, Laura Horsey, Christine Steel
Members absent: Commissioner Dean Wood
Council Liaison: Teri Cummings
Guest(s): Alma Coston, Sally McLarty, and Kevin Bryck
Staff present: John Sonnen, Planning Director and Peter Spir, Associate Planner

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Martin called the Planning Commission meeting to order in the Willamette Room of City Hall at 6:45 p.m.

Commissioner Steel expressed her concern that the commissioners had continued to talk about the case they had decided at the previous meeting under "Items of interest from the Planning Commission" on March 2, 2011. The Commissioners directed staff to schedule a debriefing session in April to discuss the matter.

MINUTES

Commissioner Babbitt suggested the Commission be consistent and only vote on minutes at regular meetings unless it formally changed procedure to allow them to be voted on at work sessions. The Commissioners corrected the draft, but postponed the vote on the Minutes of February 16, 2011 until the next regular meeting.

Scope WRA Project

Planning Director Sonnen clarified that the Commission was still authorized to work on WRA code - the Council had only rejected using a task force. His March 9, 2011 Memorandum listed WRA issues, suggested a draft work program, and suggested who the stakeholders might be and ways to involve them. He announced that Peter Spir would staff the effort. Horsey suggested paring the project down and Chair Martin suggested just focusing on a few of the most critical code problems that forced the Commission to make bad decisions. He suggested using a subcommittee of Commissioners because it would have less impact on staffing resources. Spir suggested the group could fix some obvious flaws in the code and then work on how resource boundaries were delineated. He advised the amended code had to be consistent with Metro Title 13. He suggested delineation options. The current code approach was "one size fits all." Alternative approaches were to use a matrix or have a biologist study each site

and determine what kind of setback was necessary to protect the ecosystem there. The scientist would work for the City, but the cost of the service would be borne by the applicant. Sonnen suggested also using incentives to achieve what the code could not require. For example, many jurisdictions gave property owners who enhanced a degraded resource more flexibility regarding setbacks.

Chair Martin observed a consensus to form a subcommittee. Horsey volunteered to serve on it. Babbitt volunteered to serve on it as long as the process and desired outcome was better defined than the Infill/PUD Task Force process had been; and as long as subcommittee meetings were open for others to attend. Holmes indicated she was interested. Miller was interested if the meeting schedule fit her schedule. Sonnen stressed it was important to identify all the issues early in the process and avoid the kind of contentious process Lake Oswego had recently experienced.

Holmes stressed the need for adequate public input. Attachment 3 in the memorandum suggested "WRA Outreach Possibilities." One suggestion was to establish a web page where people could sign up to be kept informed via email. Chair Martin suggested using Facebook because people could use the site to participate in the discussion. He believed the City could reach more people that way than it normally did. Others cautioned that people should not be forced to join Facebook to participate. Some residents would be left out. The City could utilize its own website. Sonnen suggested the process could also use a mailing list and hold a "brainstorming" forum or round table discussion prior to the public hearing to solicit public suggestions in a non-adversarial atmosphere. He related that Kirsten Wyatt had offered to talk to Commissioners about use the website. Chair Martin suggested meeting recordings be put on the website. Babbitt suggested assigning individual Commissioners to speak to neighborhood associations and solicit feedback.

Chair Martin clarified that he saw the process as a focused effort to fix the code - not an effort to rewrite code chapters. The subcommittee could identify the important issues and talk with the neighborhood associations. Spir could then draft and present code amendments so the subcommittee had something to start the dialogue with. The information would be available online. Sonnen advised the subcommittee to identify all the issues in the earliest stage of the process, sort them out, and then define the scope of the project. He suggested using a survey to identify issues and find out how affected property owners felt about their experience with the land use process. Councilor Cummings and Commissioner Steel suggested broadening the survey. Steel wanted to aim it at the general public, not just affected property owners. Cummings suggested using it to find out which property owners had problems with increased runoff and slumping land. That would help the City know what was happening. The City had a scientific study of the health of seven streams done in 2003-2004, but that study had never been updated or expanded to additional streams. She also suggested finding a way to educate property owners about how to maintain a healthy environment when they had resources on their property. Chair Martin asked her to find out what the other Councilors thought of the subcommittee and Facebook approach. He asked the guests what they thought about the idea to use Facebook to involve people. Two of them encouraged the Commissioners to use the

regular City website to people would not have to join Facebook to participate. They noted there were people who did not use the internet. Sonnen suggested using the City website where people could sign up to be kept updated via email. Chair Martin stressed that he wanted to find a way to create dialogue, not just offer access to information. Facebook would be an effective way to do that.

Chair Martin summarized that the Commission wanted to form a subcommittee to focus on specific areas of code. They would use the internet and neighborhood meetings to solicit feedback. Babbitt recalled the City had about 1,000 Facebook friends and he anticipated that tying the Facebook site to the City's website could increase that number. That would be useful when the City vetted other issues. Sonnen asked the Commissioners to specify what steps were to be taken so no issue was missed and they would never find themselves in a defensive position. A guest asked how the changes would affect property values. She also held that public notice was necessary. She confirmed she feared things would get "gelled" before the public notice went out. Chair Martin anticipated the changes would help property values. He and Sonnen explained the Commissioners were in preliminary stage of working out a process and how to get people engaged in it. Notice would be published prior to the formal public process. Cummings advised it was not yet clear the Council would commit to an all-out public process. She believed the Councilors would find the issues list helpful. Chair Martin anticipated the subcommittee members would meet with Sonnen and Spir. They would narrow the scope and plan how to introduce the process to the public. They would meet with the City's web specialist to determine the most effective way to use the internet.

Discuss Highway 43 Project Approach

Planning Director Sonnen's March 9, 2011 Memorandum contained an update on the Highway 43/Willamette Drive corridor project and a draft work program and outreach matrix. He related the Council wanted to find out what the community wanted to see in the corridor; find out what it could support; and then decide whether to take the next step to plan the corridor. He asked for ideas about how to involve the public in the visioning process. He explained a vision could be more than words – it could illustrate what people wanted to see in the future. He circulated an example of one from another community. He described a couple of ways to involve the public in charrettes and workshops. He advised that Metro had a modeling program and would make it available to the City. Then people could see what a concept would look like.

During the discussion the Commissioners observed there were realities that limited the possibilities on Highway 43. Sonnen advised that the project would take that into account. The first step would be to compile the data necessary data necessary in inform the public so they can make knowledgeable choices and to identify legal and physical sideboards that we need to work within. Holmes reported hearing people question why the City was talking about this when it could not afford to take over the highway and had other priority infrastructure problems to address. Sonnen advised that ODOT restriction of traffic generation from new development relying on state highways effectively limits the scale of potential changes along

Highway 43. However, ODOT was willing to relax its standards if that helped create walkable neighborhoods that reduced traffic generation; and Metro was interested in investing in town centers. But the City would have to own the highway if it wanted larger changes. Councilor Cummings clarified the Council had yet not seen a written proposal offering the highway. It would likely be very costly. She advised fuel tax revenue was declining. She related that an Economic Development Committee was conducting a survey to find out what things residents had to leave town to buy. That would inform businesses and the planning process. Commissioners suggested paying for the highway by asking the County to charge more in vehicle fees. They observed that West Linn needed to pay more attention to how Bridgeport Village; redevelopment of Foothills in Lake Oswego; and redevelopment in Oregon City would impact the corridor. Babbitt suggested adding the Chamber to the stakeholder list. Sonnen did so and advised the staff had already met with a member of the Economic Task Force. Babbitt wanted to see the neighborhoods participate in the process and update their own plans at the same time so their ideas were reflected in the larger plan. Holmes saw neighborhood plans as parts of the larger plan. They should not compete. They each had something unique to offer. Sonnen agreed that there were things that needed to be planned out at a higher level, such as easy, pleasant bike connections. He recalled that Portland had asked participants in its process to identify areas they did not want changed and areas that should be changed. Then it focused on the latter. He advised that it was often the form density took that was considered offensive, not density itself. So the design of density could be examined in public workshops where people could decide if they liked it or not. In that case the staff would enlist the help of a graphic designer. He promised to keep the Commissioners updated. He advised the staff was considering proposing forming a steering committee of Commissioners and others to ensure the community was adequately involved and the project was going the right direction. Holmes indicated she was interested in serving on the steering committee. When asked, Sonnen advised the City could do lots of things to help influence private property decisions. It could use Metro modeling to find out what it would take to make investing in the corridor a financially prudent decision. The City could offer incentives for that too. Chair Martin recalled a public/private partnership had worked well in Willamette.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Chair Martin adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at 9:00 p.m.

APPROVED:



Robert Martin, Chair



Date