

**CITY OF WEST LINN**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
WORK SESSION  
**Wednesday, February 18, 2009**

**Draft**

Members present: Chair Michael Babbitt, Vice Chair Robert Martin and Commissioners, Valerie Baker, Michael Jones, and Christine Steel

Staff present: Chris Kerr, Acting Planning Director

Members absent: Commissioners Shawn Andreas and Dean Wood

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Michael Babbitt called the Planning Commission work session to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Rosemont Room of City Hall.

### **STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**

Mr. Kerr announced a board and commission member training session was to be held on March 12<sup>th</sup>. He said the City Council planned a goal setting session in March. A “Main Street” (retail area viability) training session was to be held March 19-20 in Lake Oswego. Chair Babbitt suggested the new Economic Development Committee members should attend. Mr. Kerr reported the hotel decision had been appealed by the City Council. He reported the staff was preparing a regulatory package that addressed Accessory Dwelling Units, compatibility in the historic district, and how much time development had to build after approval.

Mr. Kerr related that the city and county had been participating in regional discussions about designation of Stafford areas as “urban reserves”(i.e., the first areas to be included in an expanded Urban Growth Boundary) or “rural reserves” (i.e., not developable for at least 50 years), or not designated at all, based on applicable state criteria. Metro had this project on a fast track and was close to fashioning a first draft. The City Manager had decided to hire a consultant to represent the city in the discussions because the meetings were taking so much staff time. He said he would distribute the related “Draft Candidate Rural Reserves” map to each Commissioner. He noted that the City Council had clarified the city’s position in an aspiration letter that indicated that West Linn wanted a larger area of Stafford to be rural reserves.

Commissioner Baker explained that she planned to attend a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting to alert them that they needed to read existing reports to learn more about the traffic situation before they recommended using part of the Oak Savannah for an aquatic center.

### **STUDY TOPIC**

**Review and Discussion of implementing adopted City documents (e.g. Imagine West Linn, Neighborhood Plans, Sustainable West Linn Strategic Plan) as applicable to Chapters 1 and 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.**

The Commissioners began to examine and discuss the Introduction and the first two chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. They observed the glossary should be updated to define new terms, such as “eco-friendly” and clarify what ORS and OAS citations referred to. A reference to City

Council 2003 goals needed to be updated. Then they considered Vice Chair Martin's suggestion to involve neighborhood associations in the process. Chair Babbitt explained the current process was to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan was consistent with all the other adopted city plans and neighborhood plans. He said the time for considering policy changes would be during the 2011 periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan. He also noted that neighborhood plans were supposed to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan at the time they were adopted. Vice Chair Martin suggested neighborhood associations would be more inclined to "buy in" to the changes if they were involved early in the process. Commissioner Baker wanted the Commissioners to clean up the Comprehensive Plan and make it consistent in the current process so neighborhood associations got a cleaner, more understandable, document to comment on later on and would not get tripped up on technical aspects, such as proofreading errors. The Commissioners discussed how they might clearly define the scope of input for the current process if they did ask neighborhood associations to comment on it. Their idea was to ask the six neighborhoods with adopted plans to highlight where the Comprehensive Plan was inconsistent with their plan. Commissioner Jones observed that some neighborhood plans conflicted with others' (e.g., regarding prohibiting flag lots, or allowing mixed use). Vice Chair Martin suggested the Commissioners might be able to work out a compromise in that case, or allow neighborhoods to create their own overlay zones, but Chair Babbitt advised the Comprehensive Plan was a general, citywide, document, and Commissioner Jones observed that would prolong the current process.

Mr. Bryck said he wanted the city to ask the citizens before they acted and give them enough time (he suggested two months) to respond. When asked if citizens understood the current process was not intended to change any policies, action measures or goals in the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Bryck indicated that he had come to the meeting believing the Commissioners were meeting as the Commission for Citizen Involvement. The Commissioners advised it was a Planning Commission meeting, not a CCI meeting. Chair Babbitt explained the current process was to look for inconsistencies between the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted city documents, including the Sustainability Plan and to ensure new terms were defined, and references to ORS and OAS were clarified. Vice Chair Martin agreed with a suggestion that each of the six neighborhood associations with an adopted plan should act as its own "clearing house" and submit one document regarding inconsistencies between their adopted neighborhood plan and the Comprehensive Plan. The Commissioners agreed that the staff would draft a letter to the neighborhood association chairs with Chair Babbitt's help. It would ask them to highlight inconsistencies between their adopted neighborhood association plans and the Comprehensive Plan. A similar letter would be sent to the chair of the Sustainability Task Force. Chair Babbitt also planned to address neighborhood association chairs at their March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the City Council and explain what the Planning Commission was doing and that they were not rewriting the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Kerr explained one purpose of the Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan was to list documents and milestones that brought the Comprehensive Plan into compliance with statewide planning goals. The Commissioners observed that list needed to be updated to include items such as Imagine West Linn; the Commission for Citizen Involvement (which was a specific state requirement); and the most recently adopted City Council goals. The Commissioners observed the Citizen Involvement policy related to methods of communication should reflect that the city

was taking advantage of new methods of electronic communications. They asked staff to find out if the Library kept an updated hard copy of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Kerr said he planned to recommend an Action Measure to ensure the city continued to support and fund the Commission for Citizen Involvement (CCI) and update the map of neighborhood boundaries. The Commissioners asked him to check on and update all the background statistics in the chapters they were examining. Commissioner Baker anticipated that forthcoming recommendations from the consultant the city had hired to study citizen and neighborhood involvement would need to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. She suggested the goal to encourage energy-efficient housing should include references to “eco-friendly” practices. The Commissioners suggested incorporating recommendations found in the Sustainability Plan and in Imagine West Linn.

One Land Use Planning policy was to allow mixed residential and commercial uses in existing commercial areas only in conjunction with an adopted neighborhood plan. They noted there was not much neighborhood commercial district in the city and discussed whether there was a need to offer convenient neighborhood shopping opportunities - like the little store in Sunset - that surrounding residents could walk to. Vice Chair Martin suggested that if the city allowed that kind of development, some might decide to build it, and it would afford residents an opportunity to meet and converse with each other. He added that more people might walk to shopping when the price of gas rose again. Commissioner Steel anticipated that elderly residents or students without a car would walk to a little neighborhood store. Mr. Bryck observed the city’s hilly topography did not encourage people to walk to shopping. Other Commissioners observed that most neighborhood plans would not allow it; people might be less inclined to walk due to the area’s typically rainy weather; there might not be sufficient density to make such a development financially viable; and observed that no one had seemed anxious to purchase and redevelop the existing little store. Mr. Kerr cautioned the Commissioners that to remove the phrase “in existing commercial areas only” would change current policy. He said changes from residential to commercial use had to be in conjunction with an adopted neighborhood plan. Vice Chair Martin then suggested language for Policy 2, “Provide convenient shopping opportunities and services within residential neighborhoods” would not be inconsistent with the existing language. Mr. Kerr agreed.

Commissioner Steel questioned why Land Use Policy 1 excepted single-family detached dwellings from design review. Mr. Kerr explained there were already code standards in place related to setbacks, height, etc., and special infill regulations that would control them. He cautioned that to review the design of single-family homes would require adopting separate design standards and guidelines and a brand new process to apply them to each house. He said the staff was drafting regulations to address infill issues, and they would propose standards to control Accessory Dwelling Units and compatibility of development in an historic district. The Commissioners observed that would be a significant policy change. They noted that the city did review variance requests. Commissioner Baker pointed out Policy 5 called for new construction and remodeling to be compatible with the existing neighborhood through appropriate design and scale, but she said that was not happening. Commissioner Jones asked what “compatibility” was. Was it where a big lot with a small house on it was redeveloped into two lots with homes and made the small house on a small lot next door more valuable? Commissioner Steel suggested the new development next door might block sun to the neighbor’s vegetable garden.

Mr. Kerr advised a group of architects might disagree on what was compatible. Commissioner Baker questioned whether the city wanted to make replacement and remodeled homes in the Sunset area keep the same design and scale as existing development. Commissioner Steel recalled seeing situations where developers were reshaping steep slopes when they built on them. She thought those homes should be reviewed. Chair Babbitt observed that would mean that the design of most homes in the area would have to be reviewed. Mr. Kerr advised there were standards that controlled building on a steep hillside; there was a cap on building at 25 degrees, and any variance request had to be reviewed. Vice Chair Martin related hearing a suggestion that the owner of a lot should be forced to offer it to his neighbors before he sold it to others.

The Commissioners examined the policy that prohibited gated access ways to residential development other than single-family homes. The staff explained existing gates had been there before the CDC had been changed to disallow them. Vice Chair Martin asked if they should be allowed for shared driveways that might not be able to accommodate additional traffic. However, he agreed with Commissioner Baker after she recalled that when she was involved with traffic safety issues, everyone wanted a gate on their street, but public streets were for all to drive on and connectivity of streets was important too.

The Commissioners wondered whether Metro had designated Bolton a Town Center and Willamette a Main Street. But Mr. Kerr advised them not to change that part of the Comprehensive Plan yet, because Metro was going to change some designations again in the next six months. No one present was quite sure where the six acres of Campus Commercial zoned land was that was mentioned in the Industrial Development, Background section. Mr. Kerr confirmed that Mary S Young Park was still a state park.

Mr. Kerr planned to provide the Commissioners with a “strike out/underline version” of the Comprehensive Plan, with the changes and updates clearly shown, by the next meeting on March 4th. Chair Babbitt planned to hold the Planning Commission meeting first, continue examining the Comprehensive Plan, and then adjourn it and convene the CCI meeting. He asked Mr. Kerr to ensure the related memorandum and explanation of the Planning Commission approach to citizen involvement was put on the city website.

**ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM STAFF** (See Staff Announcements and Updates above)

**ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION** (None)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, Chair Babbitt adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at 8:45 p.m.

**APPROVED:**

---

**Michael Babbitt, Chair**

---

**Date**