

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES January 14, 2004

Chair Young called the regular meeting of the Planning Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5th Avenue North.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

James Young, Chair
Janice Freeman, Vice Chair
Jim Crim
Janice Freeman
John Dewhirst
Ronald Hopkins
Virginia Cassutt
Judith Works

Mr. Guenther was excused from the meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Cary Guenther

STAFF PRESENT

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager
Karin Noyes, Recorder

READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 10, 2003 AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER CRIM SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA

There were no changes made to the proposed agenda.

Board Member Crim recalled that at the last meeting, Mr. Bowman had indicated that he would email a copy of the draft hedge ordinance to the Board members for their review. Mr. Chave said this ordinance is not completed yet, but he would remind Mr. Bowman of his commitment to forward a copy to each Board member.

REQUESTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Darrell Marmion, 750 Edmonds Street, said he attended the City Council Meeting of January 13th. While reviewing City Council minutes from previous meetings, he found that the Board would be discussing alternative approaches for defining the Edmonds downtown central business district. He noted that he is a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. Since the Historic Preservation Commission has an interest in this issue, he felt it would be appropriate for him to attend the Planning Board meeting. He recalled earlier Board comment that a representative from the Historic Preservation Commission should participate in this effort at some point. He emphasized that he is not on official assignment from the Commission at this time.

REVIEW OF ISSUES AND DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR DEFINING THE EDMONDS DOWNTOWN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Mr. Chave said this item is a follow up on the meeting between members of the Planning Board with the City Council's Development Services/Community Services Committee on December 16th. The discussion focused on the downtown business district, and Council Committee asked that the Planning Board forward their thoughts on the issue to the City Council. He reminded the Board of their task to review and update the Comprehensive Plan over the next year, and suggested that this is an opportune time for them to discuss some of the issues related to downtown development and the Downtown/Waterfront Plan, which is an element of the Comprehensive Plan and was initially adopted in 1995.

Mr. Chave referred to the packet of information provided by the staff, which identifies concepts and issues for the Board to consider. He cautioned that staff has not provided a cohesive recommendation at this point. The documents merely identify ideas that have been expressed by various people at various times. On the first page of the document, staff attempted to summarize some of the principles and ideas they have been hearing that will, in a general way, frame the Board's discussion. Staff attempted to provide a geographical reference for each. On the subsequent pages, staff provided more options or ideas related to each one of the principles. At the very end of the document, staff provided some ideas as to where the boundaries for the downtown could be. He emphasized that these boundaries are by no means final, but they do provide some ideas that can be considered. The ideas do not represent changes in zoning.

Mr. Chave referred to the map titled, "Downtown Business District Alternatives." He noted that the circles on the first map identify where each of the general principles would be applied. Subsequent maps provide more detail of the ideas that are up for discussion related to each of the principles. He briefly reviewed each of the five principles and the areas for which they could be applied as follows:

- **Principle A:** Define the retail core along streets having the strongest pedestrian links and pedestrian-oriented design elements.
- **Principle B:** Focus development between the retail core and the Edmonds Center for the Arts on small/scale retail, service and multi-family residential uses.
- **Principle C:** Identify supporting mixed-use residential and office areas which support and complement downtown retail uses, but which allow for more flexibility in how uses are developed. These areas are located close to the retail core. While they are not all the same, they are similar in that they all surround the downtown core. In these areas, perhaps the zoning should be a little bit different than the downtown BC retail zoning. Some of these areas are identified as strictly multi-family zoning, but others are identified as mixed-use areas. Even if the downtown core area is identified as mixed use, there could be a different type of mixed-use zoning for the areas surrounding the core.
- **Principle D:** Identify gateway/entrance areas into downtown, which serve complementary purposes. These areas are quite different from each other in use and function. These areas should be treated differently rather than applying the downtown BC zoning throughout.
- **Principle E:** Explore alternative development opportunities in the waterfront area, such as more overtly encouraging arts-related and arts- complementing uses. While the waterfront area is related to the downtown core, it is different. For instance, the Harbor Square property has been identified as a master plan area. Perhaps there are other portions of the waterfront area that should be considered for master plan zoning instead of downtown business zoning. Maybe the potential development of the Old Safeway site is more related to Harbor Square than to the downtown core.

Mr. Chave suggested that perhaps a sixth principle that should be considered is the Commercial Waterfront zoning, which is located west of the railroad tracks. A lot of the art plans call for encouraging art activities in and around the downtown area. He questioned if the plans and regulations do enough to support this concept. If the City is committed to doing more for arts development, they should take a second look at the policies and regulations to see if changes are necessary.

Board Member Freeman recalled that at the City Council Committee Meeting, Council Member Marin stated that taxes are based on the potential highest use of a property. Therefore, the City should consider the idea of sub zones so that property taxes can be based on a lesser potential. In addition, Council Member Wilson stated that the City might have trouble

maintaining the existing residential developments in the downtown area because of the way the taxes are assessed. Board Member Freeman requested that Mr. Chave elaborate on these comments. Mr. Chave explained that assessed value is based on a combination of existing use and potential use (what the plans and zoning allow). Ultimately, the assessor will resort to the highest and best use for the property. There are areas in the downtown that are zoned for a much higher level of development than what currently exists. However, if the City were to down zone these sites to recognize the existing uses, they would be taking away the potential for future infill in that location. It would be difficult for the City to consider wholesale down zoning in some areas. Therefore, he would not recommend doing so unless the Board feels there is a very good reason. Ultimately, the City must make the decision as to what the highest and best use is, and the assessor must consider this future potential when assessing the value of a property.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that it would be helpful if staff could provide a map showing the facilities that are being discussed such as the Frances Anderson Center, the Performing Arts Center, the artist in residence work area, parks, etc. These facilities are located throughout the downtown. It appears that the City Council's direction is to get a bigger bang for the community out of these facilities. They appear to be fairly evenly dispersed, and it would be nice to see how these facilities can be connected to the larger business anchors, the downtown core, the pedestrian ways, etc. Mr. Chave inquired if a larger scale map similar to what has already been provided would have sufficient detail. He noted that the land use map identifies these facilities. Board Member Dewhirst felt this type of map would be helpful. Mr. Chave said he would provide both a larger scale map and one that shows the boundaries overlaid on the land use.

Board Member Dewhirst inquired if the Public Facilities District Board has provided any discussion about how they view the art facility's connection to the rest of the downtown and the community. Mr. Chave said there has been some initial discussion between the Port and City staff regarding options for linking the waterfront to the downtown, and they have expressed an interest to be involved in the Downtown/Waterfront Plan review. But he is not sure what discussions have occurred with the Public Facilities District Board. He suggested that the Board could invite Stephen Clifton, the staff person responsible for working with the Public Facilities District Board, to attend a future meeting and provide input to the Board.

Board Member Hopkins inquired if the City owns the Fine Arts Center Project. Mr. Chave said that while the City contributed some funding to get the project rolling, the Public Facilities District is an independent organization, and they own the facility.

Board Member Young inquired if the Public Facilities District has any plans to integrate their planning process into the City's more global update of its Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown/Waterfront Plan. Mr. Chave answered that they are very much interested in participating in the update of the Downtown/Waterfront Plan discussions, as is the Port. The Port has had some discussions about having some type of arts center located on their property, too. This, along with the Edmonds Center for the Arts and the Anderson Center, will provide a triangle of art centers in the community. If these facilities can be linked up, they could have a significant draw to the area in general. This would make it possible for the City to promote a certain image that builds on their art opportunities. The Public Facilities District is very much focused on their plan, but they also recognize that they are part of a larger art community in Edmonds and are very interested in the update of the Downtown/Waterfront Plan. He suggested that the Board should invite feedback from the Public Facilities District as soon as possible.

Board Member Works asked if the Arts Commission has been involved in the Edmonds Center for the Arts project. Mr. Chave said he does not know. Board Member Works said she received a postcard announcing that the Arts Commission is developing some art space at Second and Dayton. Mr. Chave said his sense is that the Arts Commission is knowledgeable of the Public Facilities District's activities, but they are a separate group. The Arts Commission played a role in the adoption of the existing economic development and cultural arts elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Board Member Young reminded the Board of the numerous tasks involved with updating the Comprehensive Plan. He recalled a previous Board discussion about the possibility of dividing the Board Members into subcommittees to tackle individual issues related to the Comprehensive Plan update. He said that from a recent discussion he had with Mayor Haakenson, it is apparent that he wants the Board to integrate parking, empty storefronts, the Public Facilities District, the Arts Commission, the Port, etc. into their discussions.

Board Member Crim said that at the City Council Committee meeting he got the distinct impression that they were asking the Board to develop alternatives and then identify the pros and cons for each. Once the list of alternatives is available, the City Council would be happy to review them and identify those they would like the Board to pursue.

Board Member Dewhirst said he feels there is a step missing before the Board gets to the point of identifying alternatives. He said the easiest thing for the Board to do would be to review the 1994 Downtown/Waterfront Plan and make updates. They do not have to start from scratch, but can add to what is already available. Mr. Chave agreed that the Board should review the assumptions and ideas identified in the existing plan and determine what changes are necessary. Board Member Dewhirst suggested that if the Board were to start with the Downtown/Waterfront Plan, it would help them to channel the process and the Board's thinking to understand that they do not have to do everything from scratch. They can set some general parameters and then go to a mapping exercise. Hopefully, the two will be somewhat compatible. Then the Board can begin the process of soliciting input from various parties of interest and the general public. During the process, the Board will likely come up with several ideas that can be considered. He reminded the Board that staff, as part of the environmental process, is required to provide several alternatives for consideration. If these alternatives are created early in the process, they can save time in the long run.

Board Member Crim suggested that if the Board was to prepare a framework of conceptual ideas to present to the public and other interested parties, they could receive much more productive responses. Board Member Dewhirst agreed that this would be the best and most productive approach.

Mr. Chave agreed with Board Member Young that the Board would not be able to accomplish this significant task in their regular Board meetings alone. He agreed that subcommittees should be established to discuss specific parts of the process. One group could be charged with the responsibility of reviewing the Downtown/Waterfront Plan. Another group could be given the responsibility of reviewing the economic development and cultural arts elements in the existing Comprehensive Plan. A third group could be formed to review the downtown business district alternatives. The groups could report back to the collective Board at regular meetings.

Mr. Chave reviewed the extended agenda briefly and suggested that the Board could schedule a discussion on the formation of subcommittees at the January 28th meeting. Board Member Dewhirst suggested that this date would be a good opportunity to invite representatives from the Arts Commission, the Public Facilities District and the Port to provide feedback to the Board. The remainder of the Board agreed.

Board Member Young indicated that he would attempt to break the Commission into the three separate subcommittees as identified earlier by Mr. Chave. He asked that Board members contact him if they have a desire to serve on a particular subcommittee. Mr. Chave added that it would also be appropriate for the subcommittees to include members from outside of the Board such as a representative from the Port, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Arts Commission, or the Public Facilities District. Board Member Dewhirst cautioned that the more people who are involved in the early stages of the review, the harder the process will be and the longer it will take. Mr. Chave suggested that they keep the subcommittees small during the initial phase of the review and then broaden them as they get further along.

Board Member Young said he would contact Mr. Chave to set up a plan for the subcommittees. In addition, staff would invite representatives from the Arts Commission, the Port of Edmonds, the Public Facilities District and the Historic Preservation Commission to attend the next Planning Board meeting.

REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA

Mr. Chave referred to the extended agenda that was provided in the Board packets. He said he attempted to pencil out all of the issues that would be coming before the Board during the year.

Mr. Chave advised that staff is in the process of advertising the Downtown Parking Study public hearing for January 28, 2004. In addition, the January 28th agenda includes a presentation by the Traffic Engineer and the Parks and Recreation Manager regarding the Edmonds City Park Site Access and Circulation Study as requested by the City Council. However,

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because of scheduling conflicts with key staff members, this presentation will be postponed until either February 11th or February 25th. He noted that there are several items already scheduled on the February 11th meeting agenda. The items scheduled for that evening include a review of potential code amendments and administrative actions required to implement the draft downtown parking study, a review of issues regarding the regulation of methadone treatment facilities, a review of issues regarding the regulation of essential public facilities, and an update on issues and background information on the 2004 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Critical Areas Regulations. A public hearing on the draft code amendments and administrative actions intended to implement the draft Downtown Park Study has tentatively been scheduled for March 10th. Staff also anticipates that the Board will have another discussion regarding the 2004 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan on March 10th.

Board Member Crim recalled that staff made the commitment to prepare a summary of all of the alternatives associated with the draft Downtown Parking Study prior to the public hearing. Mr. Chave responded that staff has placed and will continue to place extended ads in the local newspapers to clearly explain the proposal. Board Member Crim asked that staff email each of the Board members a copy of the ad language.

Board Member Dewhirst questioned why the Board is working on the Downtown Parking Study now when they are also talking about significant changes to the downtown business district. Mr. Chave answered that the Mayor and the City Council have asked the Board to move forward with their recommendation on the parking study. He agreed that, depending on the direction the Board decides to go with the Downtown/Waterfront Plan and the Comprehensive Plan updates, parking could become an issue. He recalled that when the City Council adopted the parking regulations previously, they left out the downtown area. At that time, they commissioned the Downtown Parking Study and the City Council is concerned that leaving the study until next year would be too long. Mr. Chave suggested that the Board keep in mind the Comprehensive Plan changes that will be considered this year. If there are portions of the parking study that make sense, they should make a recommendation to go forward with the changes as proposed. For those recommendations that the Board is uncomfortable with, it might be appropriate for them to hold off on changes until after the Comprehensive Plan has been updated. He noted that parking influences a lot from a day-to-day standpoint and has a significant impact on the downtown businesses. Therefore, it is important for the Board to act on as many of the recommendations as they can now.

Board Member Young said he is favor of holding a public hearing on the draft Downtown Parking Study as soon as possible. It would be absurd to consider updating the Downtown/Waterfront Plan and the Comprehensive Plan without talking about parking issues. Any public input they can obtain on this issue would be helpful when reviewing these two plans throughout the year.

Board Member Hopkins inquired as to the target date for completing the Comprehensive Plan review. Mr. Chave said the Board's recommendations should be forwarded to the City Council some time in October, so that they can adopt the changes before the end of the year. He noted that staff would be providing information to the City Council throughout the year as to what direction the Board is moving so that the proposed revisions will not come as a surprise to them at the end of the year.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that two additional items be included on the extended agenda. He noted that, typically, the Board holds a retreat in April, which has given the Board members a chance to step back and review the past year. Since there are a lot of new members, he suggested that a retreat would be helpful. Secondly, Board Member Dewhirst noted that last year was the first year since he has been on the Board that there was no joint meeting scheduled between the City Council and the Planning Board. Mr. Chave noted that the Board did attend joint sessions with the City Council in 2003, but they were focused on particular topics. No joint meeting was held for a general discussion. Board Member Dewhirst suggested that it might be appropriate to schedule a joint meeting after the Planning Board retreat in April since there are a lot of big issues coming before the Board this year.

PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Board Member Young reported that the Highway 99 Task Force meeting was postponed for a week. He said he would provide a report to the Board at their next meeting. He noted that the Task Force is in the process of forming focus groups of business owners.

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PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board Member Works inquired regarding any training sessions that might be offered by the American Planning Association. Mr. Chave answered that from time to time, short courses in planning are sponsored by the state and hosted by a local jurisdiction. He suggested that this course would be worthwhile for new Board members to attend. In addition, the State American Planning Association Conference will be held in the Seattle area sometime in the fall. Typically, staff has been able to arrange for several of the Planning Board members to receive subsidy to attend at least part of the conference.

Board Member Young asked that staff provide information to the Board members about training programs that are being offered in the Puget Sound area. Mr. Chave agreed to pass this information on to the Board members.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 8:02 P.M.

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