



PLANNING COMMISSION

April 5, 2022

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Judi Roland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via Virtual Zoom Meeting. Per Governor Inslee's Emergency Proclamation 20-05 and 20-28 et. seq. and City of Auburn Resolution No. 5581, City of Auburn has designated official meeting locations as "virtual" for all Regular, Special and Study Session Meetings of the City Council and for the Committees, Boards and Commissions of the City.

a.) ROLL CALL/ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Commissioners present: Chair Judi Roland, Vice Chair Stephens; Commissioner Amer, Commissioner Berry, Commissioner Moutzouris, and Commissioner Sprague.

Commissioner Mason was not present.

Staff present: Senior Assistant City Attorney Doug Ruth; Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon; and Long-Range Senior Planner, Josh Steiner.

Members of the public present: Ivan Miller, Comprehensive Planning Manager, King County Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget. Another unknown person participated by Phone from 253-876-6331.

b.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 8, 2022 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Stephens moved, and Commissioner Sprague seconded to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2022 meeting as written.

MOTION CARRIED. 6-0

III. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Overview of Countywide Planning Policies

Ivan Miller from King County Growth Management Planning Council gave a presentation on the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

Senior Planner Josh Steiner said this is the second guest speaker making a presentation on regional policies influencing the City's Comprehensive Plan. Steiner introduced Ivan Miller of King County staff. He noted that the process for Auburn's periodic comprehensive plan update is starting.

Ivan Miller thanked the Commission for serving the City. He said it is an important role. He said he will provide an overview of countywide planning and invited questions.

Miller started sharing his slide presentation by showing and explaining a graphic of the hierarchy of planning influences. He talked about Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) role. He talked about PSRC's role in certifying local Comprehensive Plans and how this influences federal transportation funding. He transitioned to describing the Countywide planning policies for King County. He is lead staff person. Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) has formed in 1992 by interlocal agreement and consists of four caucus, King County, Seattle, Bellevue, and Sound Cities and other non-voting members. In 2019, the GMPC formed a regional Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) based on the importance of the topic. Local governments can only influence affordable housing supply.

He talked about the issues addressed by GMPC including policies, growth boundaries, and regional growth center designations and framework. He talked about the Sound Cities Association composed of 38 cities and their role to the GMPC as key stakeholder.

Miller explained the 2021 countywide planning policies (CPP) and how they provide guidance as common framework for jurisdictions and may go beyond requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA). The CPPs consist of 6 chapters updated to align with PSRC's Vision 2050, the GMA changes, and the Urban Growth Capacity Study (a.k.a. buildable lands). The CPPs are anticipated to be ratified tomorrow.

New topics in the CPPs include social equity, climate change, revised regional growth centers framework, new growth targets, a housing chapter overhaul, safety of transportation network, emphasis on connection between climate change and public service delivery.

Miller highlighted a couple new topics of the CPPs; the equity impact review assessment tool has been used by a few years by the County to evaluate effect on planning decisions. Also, mitigation and resilience for greenhouse gas emissions such as urban tree canopy. Financial assurances of fossil fuel facilities to ensure long-term management of land and resources, such as brownfields. New policy has been added directed at avoiding urban development impacts on rural areas.

The commission asked a couple of questions about how the topics described will eventually come before the Commission.

Miller spoke about Growth Targets; which is each jurisdiction's portion of the forecasted state and county population growth. Through these estimates termed the 'Regional Growth Strategy' and how these are allocated to counties and then to different classifications of cities; Metropolitan cities, core cities (includes Auburn), and cities with high-capacity transit centers (hierarchy is called regional geographies). The majority of the increase is focused in these regional centers. New, is the clarification that the growth target serves as the land use assumption for the Comprehensive Plan. Auburn is planning for an additional 12,000 housing units and 19,250 jobs over a 20-year period of 2019-2044. A city that does not use the targets will have difficulty gaining certification of their plan.

Miller explained future CPP work. Over the coming year the AHC will propose a housing needs assessment, monitoring, accountability, and possibly Housing element certification step to be addressed in the policies. Because of this, the State legislature added 6 months to the deadline by house bill (HB) 1241. Also climate change may have future CPP changes. Also, a moving target is a new WA State Office of Financial Management (OFM) population forecast based on US Census planned to be released in September. School siting in the urban areas is expected to be revisited in 2023.

Miller explained that the CPPs are a “bottoms up” system meaning it is up to the local jurisdiction to decide how to be consistent; it is not dictated from above. He said that the amount of change that Auburn needs to make is dependent on what the plan already contains. The CPP policies are expectations. There is not a CCP policy and comp. plan consistency review conducted by any governing body. However, if specific targets are set countywide or by the state related to housing and climate change emission reduction goals, there could be a process to determine local shares. There is a K4C Climate collaborative of 14 participating cities.

The commissioners expressed appreciation for the presentation and the understanding of influences on local plans.

Steiner added that this presentation summarizes a lot of information. A key point is that Auburn plans for population and job targets for both King and Pierce Counties. He reiterated that the Comprehensive Plan update process is started and will include future briefings before the Planning Commission. The schedule will be shared, once developed.

B. Planning Commission Rules of Procedure

Dixon explained that the Rules are reviewed each year by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission reviewed the Rules of Procedure (Rules) at their March 8th regular meeting. Also at the March 8th meeting, the Commission reviewed and discussed some staff proposed changes regarding more clarity and specification for establishing the record for Planning Commission decision making. Tonight, Staff has further changes that have been distributed in advance. These further changes are in response to the Commission’s comments March 8th on page size and format of electronic medium. There also were some edits to the past changes to simplify.

The Rules do not fully address the format of virtual meetings for the Planning Commission, because the Governor’s proclamation was recently issued and still being interpreted by the City staff for its significance. The City Council is testing the hybrid meeting format and council chambers room setup. Whether the Commission wants to continue virtual meetings is a topic that the Commission should discuss more in the future.

Ruth explained the intent of the second round of changes. He said that the past staff edits have been simplified by removing words. The changes also include specifying the page format and electronic format and size and the method of submission.

The Chair asked for the addition of "... to the Commission Secretary" in the first sentence of Section 14, Hearing Record, Subsection F (Page 13).

There were no further questions or suggestions by the Commission.

Ruth commented that the Commission will need to discuss in the future whether they want to continue with virtual meetings, with in-person meetings, or with a hybrid of both. Some of this is affected by changes in the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Previously the governor amended the OPMA to require holding virtual meetings to reduce virus transmission. The recent changes in Open Public Meetings Act, as modified by HB 1329. All three options for the Commission are available. While the emergency proclamation continues, the legislature made further changes to the OPMA on procedural matters. The changes encourage remote access to the meetings by the public and the recording of the meetings. The mandated requirements affect future emergency situations, even though even though we appear to be transitioning out of the emergency; the emergency could return. The requirements say that an agency can choose to exclusively hold virtual meetings or can limit public participation for in-person meetings. So, the determinations now are partly the decision of the agency. If only meetings are only held by virtual means or in-person participation is limited, an electronic connection must be provided.

For future non-emergency situations, the meetings could be held virtually. The legislation re-affirms posting requirements for public meetings. Also, there is a section addressing executive sessions, but that is not used by the Commission.

New, is a requirement for accepting public comment whenever the Commission takes action. Since most actions are public hearings, comment is already a step for public hearings. But some other PC decisions, such as election of officers or changes to the rules of procedure, don't normally have public comment and would need to in the future. The comments could be verbal or if written, could include a deadline in advance. This could be done by accepting verbal comments at the time of each action; or at one point in time during the meeting.

If an agency chooses to exclusively hold virtual meetings, the body must still provide an opportunity for an electronic connection if the person notifies the city in advance that they have "difficulty in participating in-person". There was a question by the Commission about the technology and set up that was answered by Ruth.

Ruth said there are also changes directed at avoiding interruptions to a meeting. Agencies may impose necessary and reasonable conditions/standards for speakers to avoid interruptions. Only speakers recognized by the board are allowed to provide comment.

To conclude, Ruth re-iterated the three options for holding public meetings; to have all meetings as strictly virtual, a hybrid of in-person and virtual, or to allow all meetings as in-person, with the exception for someone requesting special virtual participation if they notify the city in advance that they have "difficulty in participating". He also noted that public comment needs to be provide for, either in written or verbal form. These issues are an introduction to future conversations, and these may require further changes to the PC's Rules of Procedure.

The commission asked about camera operation during virtual meetings. Ruth replied that if remote meetings are held going forward, the Commission could decide to adopt rules about camera operation as part of their Rules of Procedure. A commissioner expressed that use of cameras likely increases public confidence in the proceedings. Dixon commented these topics will be on the agenda again.

It was suggested by a Commissioner that maybe the commission wants to act on the changes presented so far, and then consider a subsequent amendment when more information is available on OPMA-related changes. Dixon said that changes could be acted upon at multiple meetings since allowed by the Rules.

There was question about whether the Rules should reflect the city's official position on holding meetings. Mr. Ruth said his understanding is that the city administration has not adopted an official position and is leaving it up to the individual boards. The City council is meeting in person and allows the public to participate, either in-person or virtually. Also, the Commission suggested that the commission operation could be tied to the King County Health reported virus transmission levels; virtual, when high and in person, when low.

IV. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon reported on the former Heritage Building Site and now redeveloped as Divine Court. This construction started Monday. He gave more specifics on the description of the project.

The Commission asked if a proportion of the units will be "affordable". Dixon replied that the micro housing units are likely to be affordable due to their smaller size.

Also, Dixon said there forthcoming actions for the Bridges project, the island of City of Kent surrounded by Auburn. Both cities are to adopt later this month a resolution to cooperatively explore de-annexation and annexation change. He showed slides of the location, development status, and described the project.

Finally, Dixon showed an architect's rendition of the Senior Housing Assistance Group Legacy Plaza project across the street, south of City Hall and said it is nearing completion. He showed a short video from the project's website showing aerial views of the project during construction. He said that concludes his remarks.

The commission asked if the adjacent city-owned plaza would be restored. Staff said that the project would restore it and the project would be contributing features since the project used the height bonus provisions of city code. The commission said that with all the new commercial space being developed downtown could economic development division staff present to the Commission on their efforts to attract tenants.

The commission asked about the Auburn Ave Theater. Staff replied that with the fire and removal of the adjacent Max House Building, there are some ongoing structure integrity concerns still being evaluated. The commission asked if the building previously had an earthquake retrofit/stabilization installed. Staff responded that it had not.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Chair Roland adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.