Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2014

COMMISSIONERS:
Absent: Stephanie Bailey.

STAFF PRESENT:
City Development Director Nick Bond, Associate Planner Elle Davis, Intern Planner Scott Bonjukian.

1. CALL TO ORDER:
Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Before moving forward with the meeting agenda, Chair Stewart mentioned the passing of Commissioner Michael. The Planning Commission members spoke of his many years of service on the Planning Commission.

2. AUDIENCE COMMENTS:
NONE.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Chair Stewart asked for confirmation that adequate public notice was given for both of the public hearings on the agenda, and Planner Davis confirmed so.

A) PUBLIC HEARING TO OBTAIN PUBLIC COMMENT AND DEVELOP REGULATIONS TO AMEND MAXIMUM DENSITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MIXED USE ZONING DISTRICT

Planner Davis provided an overview of the amendment. She explained that this public hearing was a continuation of the public hearing begun at the December 15, 2014 Planning Commission meeting. She explained that the proposed amendment would increase the number of residential units allowed per acre in the City’s mixed use zones to 30 residential units per acre, and 48 units per acre where a mixed use zone overlaps with the Downtown Overlay District. Currently the maximum is 12 units per acre.

Vice Chair Coppola asked where the proposal was coming from. Director Bond said the City Council had asked the Planning Commission to study the issue after he brought it to their attention. Chair Stewart opened the public hearing.

Gerry Harman spoke about the minimum residential dwelling unit size of 600 square feet. She also expressed concerns about provision of transportation and amenities downtown. She expressed concern that the Planning Commission has had less of say over the last few years because developers are going directly to the Hearing Examiner instead. Director Bond explained that the Downtown Overlay District currently requires a minimum of 600 square feet per residential dwelling unit and that the proposed amendment would not alter the minimum residential unit size requirement in any way.

Commissioner Drury asked for clarification on how this amendment relates to the City’s purchase of 640 Bay Street. Director Bond explained that it was the most effective way to quickly tear down a burned down building, and noted the deal hasn’t closed yet. He said the Council doesn’t want to be a landlord and would rather quickly turn it around for resale or partner with a developer on a catalyst project. He said the site is a quarter-acre but allows up to four stories, and it’s not practical to allow that size of building but limit it to only three apartment units. He said the goal of a mixed-use downtown isn’t supported by the code.

When asked, Director Bond said 30 units is the same as what Kitsap County allows in its highest density zoning and is a conservative estimate of feasibility. Chair Stewart asked about examples of other
residential densities provided by staff. Planner Davis said she tried to find examples using the same kind of format that Port Orchard uses.

Commissioner Tierney asked if there are any negative ramifications. Director Bond said that depends on what one wants to see in downtown, and noted that the design review process already presents a barrier to development. He said it could be considered a pro-development or anti-development issue. Planner Davis noted the ordinance makes no change to bulk regulations, such as height, setbacks, and lot coverage, and only changes the maximum number of residential units allowed within structures.

Commissioner Baglio supported the amendment and making downtown more vibrant. He recommended reviewing the zoning code’s height restrictions and pointed out that assuming 10 feet per story would yield low ceilings when ductwork, joists, and other necessities are taken into account.

Commissioner Whittleton asked about language in the attached ordinance that suggested an unlimited number of units. Director Bond noted that is outdated and was a draft four or five months ago. Commissioner Whittleton noted other areas of the city wouldn’t be as affected by increased height. Director Bond said the amendment does not concern height and that a View Protection Overlay District is already in place downtown. He said height is also limited by what the fire district can handle with its equipment.

Vice Chair Coppola asked where parking would be located for redevelopment of 640 Bay Street. Director Bond said a hypothetical building could have structured parking accessible from Frederick or Prospect, with ground floor commercial and eight or more units above. He said the north side of Bay Street has a lower height limit and it is built on pilings, so one couldn’t go underground for parking. He noted the code has a provision for a regional parking bank, but it has never been implemented.

Ann Svatovski asked for clarification about 48 units per acre, which would allow 12 units on a quarter acre lot. Director Bond said he did a quick calculation that accounted for common space, walls, and stairwells. She also asked about the relationship between height and setback requirements in the mixed-use district. Planner Davis explained that additional setbacks are not currently required with a conditional use permit for additional height, nor is that change proposed.

Matt Murphy spoke in favor of performing a parking study for the downtown area. He said no one knows how many spots exist in downtown. He estimated there are between 400 and 500 parking spots.

Director Bond noted the parking standard in downtown is 1.3 to 2 stalls per unit, depending on the type of unit.

Chair Stewart closed the public hearing. She asked for a motion. Commissioner Baglio motioned to recommend approval of the proposed amendment. Commissioner Drury seconded the motion. Commissioners Baglio, Drury, Stewart and Tierney voted in favor of the motion; Commissioners Coppola and Whittleton opposed. Motion passed 4-2.

B) PUBLIC HEARING ON DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT OF 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Intern Planner Scott Bonjukian provided an overview of the Draft Economic Development Element of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update. He pointed out major changes to the draft element from previous plans and provided a brief history of the Comprehensive Plan update process. Director Bond reminded the Commission that the process has been ongoing for the past year. He also noted the City Council requested additional public meetings to discuss the Comprehensive Plan update.

Chair Stewart opened the public hearing.

Don Ryan spoke about height restrictions in the downtown area. He said attracting world-class businesses and jobs to downtown requires world-class structures. He said reaching the height limit on the north side of Bay Street is economically infeasible due to the extensive foundation work required. He said simply meeting the parking demand would reach the height limit first.

Director Bond said it’s important to hear from downtown property owners and businesses about removing barriers to development, and those type of concerns should be captured in the Economic Development Element.

Gerry Harman praised Poulsbo’s downtown and encouraged the city to strive toward the goal of providing a variety of goods and services available in the downtown area and on strengthening the maritime theme.

Greg Wall spoke about internet infrastructure and the importance of improving the city’s internet service in order to draw world-class businesses. He said the Planning Commission should examine the issue more.
Director Bond said one of Port Orchard’s barriers is that its downtown is below the mean flood elevation, instantly giving it a disadvantage to development. He said the city’s design review process is rigorous and has to be done no matter what type of project is proposed, and has vague design guidelines. He said Poulsbo and other cities have a more transparent and simple process. Chair Stewart said there aren’t any necessities in downtown. Commissioner Baglio supported taking a closer look at downtown regulations. Director Bond agreed and said that the design review board should more clearly make their desires known. Commissioner Drury noted the design review board was created in reaction to a particular project.

Director Bond encouraged the Commission to more closely read the Economic Development Element and come up with ideas to facilitate development or make improvements.

Commissioner Whittleton asked how many of Port Orchard’s jobs are living wage jobs. Director Bond said that hasn’t been studied. Commissioner Whittleton asked whether policies should read, “The City shall...”, or “The City should”. Director Bond said “shall” holds the City accountable to an action.

Commissioner Drury spoke about downtown height limits. He said during the creation of the Downtown Overlay District, the assumption was that height limits would be either 39 feet or 55 feet. He said the higher limit was assumed to be contingent on a public amenity. Director Bond said the City should set a height in stone and not require conditional use permits for a height bonus if requirements are met.

Gerry Harman said developers could buy additional height by providing something like art to the city. She referred to a public art report compiled two years ago. She said an earlier study for an underground parking garage was deemed infeasible. She also said the City does not own all of the parking spaces in downtown. She said removing parking from the waterfront isn’t feasible because of the area’s hills and residents' increasing age.

Chair Stewart closed the hearing. No motion was made.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM STAFF

Director Bond announced that the City Council has asked for joint meetings between the City Council and the Planning Commission to discuss and review the draft elements of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update. Director Bond said that the first such proposed meeting would focus on a presentation of the draft Vision, Land Use & Housing, and Economic Development elements of the Comprehensive Plan. A second meeting closely following would feature a public hearing and further discussion. Director Bond suggested several dates in March and April. He said he would send out a Doodle poll to find the best available dates for the meetings.

Vice Chair Coppola asked about membership to the American Planning Association. Director Bond said he had budgeted for that, which comes with certain benefits. He also said the national planning conference is in Seattle this year and is very expensive, but would be willing to help make it work if any of the Planning Commissioners wants to attend.

Commissioner Baglio asked about the committee requested on the proposed impact fee ordinance. Director Bond said he and the Public Works Director met with the consultants and revised the 6-year transportation improvement plan. He said further input would be solicited from outside stakeholders, but an actual committee would not be formed.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Tierney motioned to approve the meeting minutes from December 15, 2014. Commissioner Coppola seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. ADJOURN:
Chair Stewart adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

Nick Bond, City Development Director

Annette Stewart, Chairman