

**REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

August 21, 2013

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Franz Wiechers-Gregory, Commissioners Murray, Vice Chairman Chandorkar, Sanders and Biethan

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Commissioners Miller, O'Hara

STAFF PRESENT: Sarah Stiteler, City of Redmond Planning Department; Jeff Churchill, City of Redmond Planning Department; Thara Johnson, City of Redmond Planning Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Lady of Letters, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Gregory in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

There were no changes to the agenda.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

There were no items from the audience.

MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL:

MOTION by Commissioner Sanders to approve the meeting summary from the 8/14/2013 meeting. MOTION seconded by Commissioner Biethan. MOTION approved unanimously (5-0).

Public Hearing and Study Session, 2013 Redmond Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Miscellaneous Amendments, presented by Jeff Churchill and Thara Johnson, City of Redmond Planning Department.

Chairman Gregory opened the public hearing and study session. Ms. Johnson gave some background on the topic, noting that the City went through a Code rewrite process in 2010. The revised Zoning Code was adopted by City Council in April of 2011. At the end of that year, the Council also adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. Since then, staff has been compiling a list of housekeeping amendments. A package of those amendments has been given to the Commission and is the topic of this public hearing.

Tom Hinman spoke to the Commission first in the public hearing. Mr. Hinman lives at 6528 159th Avenue NE in Redmond. On behalf of the group Sustainable Redmond, he acknowledged the diligence of staff in cleaning up a range of topics. He noted that the

tenor of these changes largely keeps with several recommendations advocated by community members, including Sustainable Redmond. The group particularly applauds Items two and three on the issue matrix as presented by staff, dealing with outreach practices and activities in the broader context of seeking public input in general. He said that the implementation details are still a work in progress, but the broader inquiry into policy provisions will support those continued improvements.

Mr. Hinman continued that Sustainable Redmond made comments to the Commission on Item 12, updating street tree requirements. Mr. Hinman said the City's Street Tree Plan has been recommended for deletion, as it is not current. He wanted to know why it was not current and what would replace it. Public advisory on community tree coverage is recommended by the Arbor Day Foundation in their Tree City, USA criteria, and has been established in other Eastside cities. Such a body, as advocated repeatedly by Sustainable Redmond, should be considered in this context. Items 15 and 18 both deal with additional opportunities for public comment or standardized processes, and Sustainable Redmond supports those.

Item 19 deals with revising Master Plan Development procedures. Mr. Hinman said the opportunity for additional public comment provided in this staff recommendation is strongly supported by Sustainable Redmond. Removing the present discretionary component, doubling the number of neighborhood meetings, and adding a public meeting early in the development process serves both the community and the developer, Mr. Hinman said. Early communication on development concepts can help reduce the cost and controversy of projects before significant developer investments are made in design and engineering.

Item 21 deals with revised notice procedures for Type V public hearings. Mr. Hinman said the opportunity for additional public comment in this recommendation is strongly supported by Sustainable Redmond. He said a 500-foot radius may suffice for residential neighborhoods, but it may not be sufficient for urban centers where development projects can impact congestion and affect a broader number of regional travelers. Mr. Hinman said an 800-foot or perhaps larger radius might be appropriate. Additionally, a two-tier notification process for those who are beyond the initial notification radius could also be appropriate. In any case, both business and residential tenants must be included in that outreach process.

In closing, Mr. Hinman recognized the work done by staff on this process and the Planning Commission's robust discussion on more holistic communications and public outreach strategies to include the incorporation of new technologies. Sustainable Redmond is looking forward to learning more about implementation of these policy improvements.

Chairman Gregory asked Mr. Hinman about the public advisory group on community tree coverage. Mr. Hinman said the Arbor Day Foundation has three criteria. A city must have an ordinance for trees, which Redmond does. A city must also have a public advisory body with regard to street trees. The City of Redmond does that advisory work

through the Natural Resources Department, to Mr. Hinman's knowledge, and there is no public voice in that process. Sustainable Redmond is trying to recommend that change. The Foundation's third criterion is for a city to have a tree preservation plan to complement the ordinance, and the City of Redmond has an Urban Forest Plan. Mr. Hinman said his group is trying to expand the opportunity for public comment in the arena of tree coverage.

Commissioner Biethan asked Mr. Hinman if he was suggesting a public advisory board should be put in place regarding street trees, and Mr. Hinman said he was. Mr. Hinman said he was suggesting not as much a conversational, public body, but more a body which would incorporate public members such as people from other advisory groups or from the development community. This would expand the review process beyond a staff function. Commissioner Sanders asked about other Eastside cities which had this type of process. Mr. Hinman replied that Kirkland did and he believed Issaquah did, as well. Chairman Gregory said he would ask staff to get more information on that particular topic.

Mike Fernandez next spoke to the Commission as part of the public hearing. He lives at 8827 NE 191st Street in Bothell, and he has been on the staff at Washington Cathedral since 1994. He was concerned about Item 3 regarding the corner of Woodinville-Redmond Road and 124th Street. He wanted to clarify that this area was going to be zoned R1 and R4. When it was annexed, this area was zoned as RA5. He confirmed with staff that the zoning change was just for the right-of-way, and would not affect the church property. Seeing no other public testimony, Chairman Gregory closed the public hearing, including written testimony.

Chairman Gregory asked for some comments from the Commission and the staff about forming a public advisory group for trees. Mr. Churchill noted that this idea was discussed by the Planning Commission earlier in 2013 when amendments were made to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code proposed by Sustainable Redmond. He was not sure what happened in that discussion, but he said he would review that and see what staff members had said at that time. Commissioner Sanders said she was not sure what role a group like that would play and which commissions or agencies it would interact with. Her first thought is that this role is, essentially, how Sustainable Redmond is functioning currently, as a de facto public advisory group. She asked if there are other public advisory groups on other issues, and how they were structured.

Mr. Churchill noted that all of the City's boards and commissions are advisory groups. Commissioner Sanders asked if there was anything more focused, specifically for sculpture or music, for example. Ms. Johnson noted that there was a Parks Commission and an Arts Commission, which focus on different topics. Commissioner Biethan said the Planning Commission is similar to these other groups, in that each is appointed by the City Council. Commissioner Sanders said a trees group would need some fleshing out. She did not think it was in the purview of the Planning Commission to endorse creating a tree advisory group, but she suggested that the Planning Commission could still review the idea. Commissioner Chandorkar said he did not think Sustainable Redmond was asking the Commission to take on an additional responsibility, but rather, the

Commission was being asked to make a recommendation to the City Council to establish a trees group. Commissioner Chandorkar said that the Parks Commission should handle trees, and he believed the Planning Commission lacked information on the trees issue.

Commissioner Murray asked staff what difference there would be in having an official tree advisory group tied to the City versus what Sustainable Redmond is doing currently. Commissioner Chandorkar echoed that question. Commissioner Murray said there is already a public advisory group on community tree coverage, which is Sustainable Redmond. Sustainable Redmond has spoken to the Commission many times. He asked if there was a value in making Sustainable Redmond an official public advisory group. Chairman Gregory said that was the point of the Sustainable Redmond presentation, that a tree advisory group should be a City body rather than a group of citizens. He noted that this would have to eventually be a City Council decision, but he noted that, with regard to Item 12, that the Commission was called on to recommend that such a public advisory group should be created.

Commissioner Murray asked what would happen when a Salmon Commission was needed, or a Power Boat Commission. Commissioner Chandorkar agreed that those were good questions, and said that Sustainable Redmond was looking for sufficient voice and input into the public process to influence decisions. He did not support the idea to create a Tree Commission, which he saw as another level of bureaucracy. He wanted to know what other cities have done.

Chairman Gregory said he would like to see what other cities were doing, as well. He noted that trees are a special subject on many different projects. He said that another commission or advisory group could muddy up the process, and added that there is plenty of input through the Planning Commission and other bodies to the City Council. He was not in favor of recommending the creation of another advisory group.

Commissioner Biethan said the Commission should find out what other cities are doing with trees, what their ordinances are, and how they implement the Tree City, USA standards. He said that there is a public process already set up in Redmond, and he did not want to jump into a new process without knowing all the ramifications. Chairman Gregory said he would consider this research on Tree City, USA as a point for staff to look into and a future matrix issue. Commissioner Sanders said staff should focus specifically on the public advisory group piece. She said the Commission should not make an endorsement with regard to an advisory group, but rather pass some information along to City Council. Chairman Gregory said that was a valid point and he supported Commissioner Sanders' idea.

Commissioner Murray noted that Mr. Hinman had pointed out that the Tree Plan for the City was not current and also had asked what would replace it. Commissioner Murray said that should be on the issues matrix as well. Ms. Johnson said she reviewed this topic at the study session with the Commission last week. The City's current Street Tree Plan has not been updated in ten years. The Plan was created to determine an inventory of trees already planted in the City, primarily in Downtown, but some in North Redmond.

That has not been an ongoing effort, however. The current practice is to coordinate with the Parks Department to ensure that any new developments use trees already planted in the neighborhoods where they are going in, for conformity. If there are issues with tree maintenance, staff confers with the Parks Department to see if there are certain tree species that can cause problems and then makes a recommendation to a developer. Language has been added to that section of Code to reflect that practice. Commissioner Murray asked if the outdated Tree Plan needed to be replaced, seeing as how there were some mechanisms already in place for tree awareness. Ms. Johnson said she did not believe the Plan needed to be replaced.

Commissioner Chandorkar asked if this was a Zoning Code or Comprehensive Plan issue. Ms. Johnson said this was a Zoning Code issue. In section RZC 21.32.090, street trees are mentioned specifically. Staff is proposing to remove some language regarding street tree species, the City's recommended street tree list, and the City's Street Tree Plan, which is the inventory that has not been updated. Chairman Gregory said this was a simple housekeeping measure: because the street tree list does not truly exist, it should not be referenced in the Code. Commissioner Chandorkar asked if this was a misunderstanding on Mr. Hinman's part. Mr. Churchill said part of the confusion was that the Street Tree Plan was not actually a plan but rather an inventory of trees that was done many years ago. He was not sure how this language got into the Code, but he wanted the Code to reflect the reality that such a Plan does not exist. Street trees get selected in coordination with the Parks Department based on maintenance and consistency.

Commissioner Biethan asked which document staff was making changes to with regard to street trees. Ms. Johnson pointed out this information was in the Zoning Code. Chairman Gregory said the language of choosing appropriate trees was clearly laid out in the Code as the purview of the City Planning and Parks departments. Thus, he summarized, staff is deleting the language which mentions the Street Tree Plan, because the Plan does not truly exist. Mr. Churchill noted that Mr. Hinman had likely seen this language before. Commissioner Chandorkar asked if a formal street tree list would not be created. Ms. Johnson said that is correct. The selection of street trees will occur in the development review process.

Chairman Gregory said the only other item from Mr. Hinman's presentation was Item 21, revising the notice and procedure for Type V public hearings. Mr. Hinman suggested expanding the radius from 500 feet to 800 feet or more, with a two-tier notification system. Commissioner Chandorkar said he agreed with Mr. Hinman's suggestion, and said that, for major projects, it would be important to reach the maximum number of citizens possible and give the maximum number of opportunities for public input. Commissioner Murray said he liked putting in a caveat to limit this to the urban centers. Commissioner Chandorkar said this would deal with Type V public hearings. Chairman Gregory said that in urban centers, a 500-foot radius was not adequate in Mr. Hinman's view, and a two-tier system was needed.

Commissioner Murray said, in practical terms, the 800-foot radius would be three football fields' worth of distance, or near a half-mile. He said the entire urban center would have to be notified on every project. Other Commissioners countered that 800 feet was actually less than a quarter mile. Commissioner Chandorkar noted that for projects like Group Health, a 500-foot notification did not reach that many people. Commissioner Biethan said this was a simple matter of notification. Commissioner Murray said he supported the idea, but wanted to make sure it was considered practically. Commissioner Chandorkar said some larger projects have citywide impacts. Chairman Gregory said, for example, with Redmond Town Center, a 500-foot radius would not have reached anyone for public input. He asked why these distances were included. He noted that with larger projects, there must be better ways for public outreach. Chairman Gregory would support an 800-foot radius expansion.

Mr. Churchill reiterated the changes proposed by staff: one deals with how many neighborhood meetings there would be for Type 5 Master Plan developments. The change would be from one to two meetings. Also, there is a change proposed for all Type V public hearings that include master plans or development agreements, which are the most common permits issued. The change would be to mail the notice to the public near the development site. Right now, for Type V public hearings, the notice is mailed only to parties of record. Staff's proposed changes would make things consistent with all the City's other notice procedures, which use a 500-foot radius. Mr. Churchill continued that staff likes the consistency with the notice provisions, in that 500 feet is a standard. Also, he noted that with projects like Group Health or Redmond Town Center, the notice radius is not what got people involved and interested. The scope of the project and certain controversial issues brought people out, and Mr. Churchill said it would probably not have made a difference if the City mailed notices to people using a 5-foot or 500-foot radius.

Mr. Churchill did not think expanding the radius would solve the problem that Mr. Hinman raised. Mr. Hinman was talking about congestion and projects in urban centers, which can impact regional travel. Mr. Churchill said the time to deal with congestion is during the development of transportation policies and the Transportation Master Plan. By the time someone comes up with a Master Plan, there is a supply of mobility units and a demand of mobility units involved with each project. If the demand for the project does not exceed the supply, then there would be no mechanism to make changes that would significantly reduce congestion. Commissioner Murray noted that transportation really is the issue that drives input on projects, and adding radius for notice probably would not make a difference. He spoke about developing a strategy for each project as it comes up to improve notification, perhaps improving web outreach or changing the placement of notice signs around a project.

Commissioner Murray did not want to support a change in policy due to an assumption that such a change would be the most effective way to get the public involved. Any changes need to be systemic, and a master strategy should be employed any time the City wants to communicate with its residents. Changing the radius of notification might not be the most practical idea. He said it might be better to reconsider the radius issue after

hearing about the City's overall communication strategy. He noted that that the Planning Commission was considering changes to three or four individual items to improve notification, but those changes appeared more ad hoc, not strategic, to him. Chairman Gregory said that was a good point, and asked Mr. Churchill about the 500-foot radius rule. Mr. Churchill said it was the distance for required mail notice, per the Zoning Code. Chairman Gregory supported Commissioner Murray's point about improving overall communication strategy versus responding with a change in the radius. Chairman Gregory asked the Commission if the members would support staying with the 500-foot distance. Commissioner Murray said he would like to hold on that decision until the Commission has a better understanding of the City's entire communication strategy.

Commissioner Chandorkar said there are two points to consider: a need for a larger, more comprehensive communication strategy, and that the proposed 800-foot distance does not necessarily suffice. He said shooting down the 800-foot radius concept would not be a good idea, but he also suggested keeping the idea on hold for a separate discussion. He agreed with Mr. Hinman that major projects need to have a larger notification area, perhaps even citywide. Chairman Gregory said the Commission needs to focus on specific amendments, and moved the discussion to the issues matrix.

Issue 1 deals with unit lot subdivisions, which Commissioner Sanders had been concerned about. She said the changes made by staff answered her questions. She was still concerned about green-lighting this issue without a timetable. This provision has been in place eight years and has only been used five times, primarily in the past two years. She said she would be happy with closing this issue. Ms. Johnson showed the Commission a few slides on the unit lot subdivision topic.

Chairman Gregory moved on to Issue 2. He noted that the Commission has talked in generalities before about the citywide communication process. In reflecting on that, he wondered if the Commission could help staff members out with this concept, which is a huge task to ask them to tackle. He asked if the scope of Issue 2 could be narrowed a little bit to focus on notification for development projects. Commissioner Sanders agreed with that concept, but noted that one concern she had was not captured in the issues matrix, which is the use of electronic media or websites. She was aware that some agencies are legally bound to use newspapers for notifications, which she did not believe was an effective way to reach a large part of the public. She would like to see the City use its own website as a newspaper of sorts to give the public the information it needs. She would like to see the use of the website as a matter of policy, in the same way a newspaper or signs are used currently.

Mr. Churchill said that right now, the notices the City sends to the newspaper are already put on the City website. He asked if Commissioner Sanders was trying to codify that procedure. She said that was indeed what she was asking for, as a way to let people know where to go for information on a consistent basis. Commissioner Murray said there were two issues at play in Commissioner Sanders' request. One was for codifying the process of putting information on the web and other is the ease of finding information on the website and proper website maintenance. He said the two issues were different. He would

like the City to make it easier to find notifications, but he was not sure that had to be codified. Commissioner Sanders said a change in graphics on the website or a change in communications policy could undermine the public outreach effort. She would like to make effective use of the City website in notifying people and publicizing information about development projects.

Chairman Gregory said, in many state agencies, there are provisions to publish information in newspapers, websites, and other assorted means. He said that the City is catching up to modern communication and he did not believe it would be a burden to codify that notices should be in a certain newspaper and the City website. He noted that there has been a trend at the state level to codify new information technology.

Commissioner Biethan said he did not care if anything was codified or not. He said the issue is that the City is not reaching a large swath of people that might be affected on certain projects. He said the City is also not getting the public input it is trying to get, and noted that on one larger City transportation survey, only ten people responded. He would like to see some results-based measurement systems and results-based outcomes, but he was not certain the Commission had enough of an understanding about current communication techniques. Commissioner Sanders said this problem was not specific to the City. She said any agency trying to get out information has a difficult time reaching people. She would like the City to look at new ways to communicate, which Commissioner Biethan did not disagree with.

Commissioner Murray said that regardless of the results of a communication process, it would be nice to be systematic about how the City tries to get results. He asked if there were a strategy that the City followed for every communication campaign that led to an identification of the audience, the message, and the means of communication. Mr. Churchill said there was nothing that formal at the City level regarding communication processes. Commissioner Murray said staff members are expert planners, not necessarily experts in group communication. He did not point this out as a fault, merely a different concentration of talent. He would like a systematic communication action plan guided by experts or perhaps the City's own communication department. In that way, the messaging and the audience could be determined for each development project, and the City staff could go through a list of procedures, including using a website or mailing a notice, for example. He would like to see a process used consistently for every project, perhaps with some guidance from the City's own communications unit.

Chairman Gregory noted that the City's communication office consisted of, basically, one person and a graphic artist. He would like to talk about this larger issue of how the City communicates, but would like to narrow the scope of what the Commission is working on within the issues matrix, as well. He did not support the idea of hiring a communications consultant any time there was a City project, but said the City could learn from agencies like Sound Transit when it comes to getting people to come to the table who are impacted by a certain development. He would like to schedule an agenda item about this in the future, but would like to keep the focus on how communication impacts development projects, not other City communication issues.

Commissioner Chandorkar noted that the mechanism of public feedback needed to be explored, as well. He did not have a preference with regard to website versus newspaper on communication policy, but he would like to understand what the City does about communicating to the public on development projects and how public feedback is received and incorporated. Chairman Gregory asked the Commission members to collect their thoughts on their own communication experiences and bring that up for a future discussion on the larger communication issue. Commissioner Murray said a whole meeting could be devoted to the topic, not just creating a laundry list of things to do, but rather a creative brainstorming session about communication strategy. Chairman Gregory said that would be a good start in capturing ideas and focusing on the purpose of City communication. Commissioner Murray said a white board could be used to help in that process. Chairman Gregory said this should be a future agenda item, and noted the Commission is getting dinged, fairly or unfairly, about its communication process. For the series of amendments staff is proposing, in Item 19, he said there were no more comments from the Commission, but noted that a larger, more general communication issue has been raised. He closed Issue two.

The next issue dealt with master plan development neighborhood meetings, and was a concern of Commissioner Biethan. He did not ask to keep the issue open, but said his concern was still the same. He said that by adding a second neighborhood meeting, new information and new concerns are often brought in that can make a project more costly. He said that if more public input comes in early in the process of a project, this issue becomes a moot point and is wrapped into the Commission's previous discussion. He did not know if there was a right answer to his concern. Commissioner Chandorkar supported the idea of having a neighborhood meeting later in the process.

Commissioner Murray said he was content to support a recommendation about staff's proposed amendments to the City Council at this meeting. Chairman Gregory noted that the one stumbling block to making that happen was the possibility of creating a public advisory group on community tree coverage. He summarized that the Commission had fully reviewed the specific proposal made by staff, which is basically taking out some language referencing the Tree Plan or tree list. Discussing other topics would not impact the particular item the Commission is reviewing. Chairman Gregory was prepared to make a recommendation and still hear about a public advisory committee on trees in the future. He noted that the tree subject is broad and had been discussed by the Commission earlier.

MOTION by Commissioner Chandorkar to recommend the adoption of the Redmond Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code miscellaneous amendments. MOTION seconded by Commissioner Murray. With no further discussion or amendments, the MOTION was approved unanimously (5-0) and the amendments were adopted.

Chairman Gregory said the Commission did not need to revisit these amendments at its next meeting, as previously planned, other than discussing the tree advisory group concept. He said that the larger discussion on increasing public input would come later. Thus, he suggested that there would be no meeting on August 28, but the issue of public

input should be a centerpiece of the Commission's work in the fall. Staff approved of this change in the meeting schedule.

REPORTS/SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S):

Ms. Stiteler noted that at the City Council meeting prior to this Commission meeting, Council members heard a staff report on the work the Commission had done on the General Commercial Zone and Manufacturing Park Zone. The Council will take action on this topic on September 17. The Council also passed the Transportation Master Plan, which has been a multi-year process.

Commissioner Chandorkar noted that he recently visited the project Vision 5 in Redmond, created by Robert Pantley. He said all the Commissioners should see it when they get a chance. Commissioner Chandorkar said it was a mix of innovative housing and affordable housing. He said it was a nice single-unit apartment complex where everyone has one small space and a common space. Of the residents of Vision 5 he talked to, Commissioner Chandorkar heard that the accessibility close to the Redmond bus lines was very good. The residents also liked the fact that the units were small and sustainable. The complex had a garden, as well. He said this trend towards smaller units would become more prevalent, and speak to the Commission's latest discussions about affordability.

Commissioner Murray noted that his younger brother lives in this complex. There is an unplanned impact of this development, which is a visit from the Fire Department every week due to someone accidentally pulling a fire alarm or because of heavy smoke in the community kitchen. Commissioner Murray said the Fire Department will most likely say there has been an increase of false alarms. He noted that it was a great complex overall, but there are some drawbacks. Commissioner Chandorkar said it was a LEED Platinum building.

Ms. Stiteler asked the Commission to take note of an upcoming short course on local planning. The City of Sammamish is hosting this program on September 5. Several Commissioners have gone before, and are welcome to go again. This is a three-hour session that is an introduction to Washington's Growth Management Act, the Open Public Meetings Act, and other legal and planning issues. She said this was good information for Commissioners. Commissioner Chandorkar personally recommended going to this discussion, particularly to learn about the Growth Management Act.

ADJOURN

Chairman Gregory adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:15 p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Planning Commission Chair

September 11, 2013
