

City of Redmond Planning Commission

January 23, 2013 Meeting Summary
Redmond City Hall – Council Chambers
15670 NE 85th Street, Redmond, Washington

Planning Commissioners in Attendance:

Franz Wiechers-Gregory, Chair; Phil Miller, Eric Murray, Robert O'Hara and Sheri Sanders

Planning Commissioners Excused:

Scott Biethan and Vibhas Chandorkar, Vice-Chair

Staff in Attendance:

Sarah Stiteler, Senior Planner, Jeff Churchill, Senior Planner; Eric McConaghy, Associate Planner; Cathy Beam, Principal Planner and Judd Black, Manager, Development Review

Call to Order:

Chair Wiechers-Gregory called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of the agenda:

The agenda was approved without changes.

Items from the audience:

Tom Hinman discussed comments by City Council members at the study session on 1/22/13 summarizing discussions at the Council's retreat. The City Council identified a number of action items, two of which Mr. Hinman felt were germane to the second study session on this evening's agenda [Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan Amendments for Tree Removal Exceptions and Definition of the Technical Committee]. The first item reported by Mr. Hinman was that the City Council believes that there is value in creating a layman's guide to the City's development process especially with the creation of the e-Zoning Code and Energov. The second action item is that neighborhood meetings, community outreach and issues around public notice will be included in the City's new Communications Plan, which is now underway.

Rosemarie Ives gave testimony regarding State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklists and public notice procedures. She stated that SEPA checklists need to be improved, as they are very ambiguous. She cited as an example the SEPA checklist for the Group Health site which provided no indication of the number of significant and landmark trees on the site. Further, she stated that during the public notification process for the Group Health Master Plan there was no indication there were tree exceptions. Mrs. Ives stated that SEPA checklists can be improved through an administrative process and notification processes should be strengthened.

Approval of meeting summary:

The meeting summary for January 9, 2013 was approved unanimously without changes.

Study Session, Overlake State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Planned Action Update:

Jeff Churchill, Senior Planner, requested that the Planning Commission proceed to review the issues matrix. Chair Gregory acknowledged correspondence from Tom Hinman for the record. A motion for the Planning Commission to adopt the recommendation of the Technical Committee to adopt the updates to the Overlake SEPA Planned Action was made and seconded. Commissioner Miller expressed the concern that the presence of a SEPA Planned Action may preclude public input on environmental issues and that the City should address issues of notice and public participation prior to recommending these updates. Chair Gregory stated that he felt the notice and public participation issues were broader and could be docketed as a work program item. The Planning Commission discussed ways to memorialize their concerns regarding these issues. Mr. Churchill answered that their concerns could be stated in a letter or incorporated into the Planning Commission report. The motion passed 4-1, with Commissioner Miller voting no.

Study Session, Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan Amendments for Tree Removal Exceptions and Definition of Technical Committee:

Eric McConaghy, Associate Planner, reviewed the items included in the package of amendments proposed by the applicant, Neighbors and Citizens for a Sustainable Redmond (Sustainable Redmond). The amendments include changes regarding exceptions to tree standards, public notice procedures and definition of the Technical Committee. Mr. McConaghy and Cathy Beam further reviewed with the Commission the recommendations of the applicant and those of the Technical Committee.

The Commission discussed and completed recommendations regarding various elements of the proposed amendments as follows:

Public Notice Boards: Commissioners agreed that changes to the City's current public notice signs are warranted and need to be incorporated. A motion to recommend reassessment and improvements to notice boards was moved and passed unanimously. The Planning Commission asked staff to review the City's standards for notice boards with regard to specific aspects of design and content, such as the use of icons to note exceptions and QR codes, or similar technology, to make easy links to more information. Planning Commission also recommended that a new means of calling out exceptions, not only from tree protections, be added to notice boards.

Neighborhood Meeting for Tree Exceptions: Commissioners did not support requiring a neighborhood meeting for exceptions to tree protections, in addition to any already required meeting for a development proposal, but did express their interest that notice for a development proposal should make clear to the public any exceptions known at that time that differ from the standard requirements. Planning Commission agreed that public comment on exceptions did not need to take the form of neighborhood meetings and that an extended period of written comment or some other means of providing comment to the decision maker would be appropriate.

Tree Replacement Ratios as part of Master Plans in Urban Centers: The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed amendment from the applicant to remove an existing allowance for modified tree replacement ratios for master plans in urban centers. The motion to remove this provision failed by a vote of 1 – 4.

Minimum Tree Retention when Exceptions are Granted: The Planning Commission considered the proposal from the applicant: Should the City establish a minimum standard to retain 50% for landmark trees and 20% of significant trees when exceptions are granted? The motion to establish this minimum failed by a vote of 2 - 3.

Definition of Technical Committee: The Planning Commission considered the applicant’s proposal to add a definition of the Technical Committee to the Zoning Code and the Comprehensive Plan. The Technical Committee recommended that the complete definition was more appropriately located within the Municipal Code and should be removed from the Glossary, due to possible inconsistencies with incomplete definition. Further, the term, “Technical Committee” should be linked electronically to the complete definition in the Municipal Code. A motion was made and seconded regarding the Technical Committee recommendation and was favored by a unanimous vote of the Planning Commission.

Announcements and Scheduling

Sarah Stiteler, Staff Liaison, noted that the City Council held a study session the previous evening at which they discussed framework issues regarding the 160th site. Council’s views on these issues will be incorporated into the Request for Proposals that the City is now preparing. The City Council did not favor the amendment to the Downtown Pedestrian System Map for the linkage through the 160th site and adjacent properties to the east. They expressed concern regarding the likelihood of pedestrians crossing mid-block at the terminus of the linkage on 160th and that it could create a serious safety hazard. Planning Commissioners stated that when reviewing the Downtown amendments package they did not have information regarding the City’s interest in senior housing on the site or the crosswalk issue and therefore did not have the opportunity to weigh in on that issue as they would have desired.

Adjourn

The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:03 p.m.

Summary prepared by:

Sarah Stiteler, Senior Planner / Planning Commission Staff Liaison